STUDIES AND RECORDS

VOLUME V

PUBLISHED BY THE
...IAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION
NORTHFIELD, MINNESOTA
1930

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PUBLICATIONS OF THE

NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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PREFACE

A migrating person, writes a noted scholar, "is more than flesh and bones, more than clothes, a bundle on his back, and a satchel in his hand — he is a culture medium, and a part of all human life that has preceded him." In other words, immigrants are people, not lines in a graph, dots on a map, or figures in a table. All that contributes to our understanding of the immigrant adds to our comprehension of American life as a whole. For, as an observer of the American scene remarks, "There are all the colors and forms of humanity in our daily life — the mingling of races and moulding of a race — the amalgamation of ancient inheritances into a new tradition."

In the essays and documents that comprise the present volume one may catch reflections of "the colors and forms" of one immigrant element in America — that made up of the people who trace their origins to the western half of the Scandinavian peninsula. One article tells of a fur trader of the early nineteenth century who knew the perils and hardships of wilderness life in the Canadian Northwest. In a group of translated "America letters" — derived from manuscripts preserved in Norway — three immigrant women set forth their experiences on the frontier in the foundation period of the upper Mississippi Valley. In another document the captain of an emigrant vessel recounts vividly his observations and experiences on a journey made eighty-six years ago from New York to Wisconsin, then the Mecca of immigrants from the European North. One article describes in concrete terms some of the everyday social and economic aspects of pioneering, with a community in the northern valley of the Mississippi as the point of vantage.

That the Norwegian immigrant has sought to interpret himself in relation to both the new world and the old is

demonstrated in the appraisal of Norwegian-American fiction, herewith published. This study is timely in view not only of the place that one book in this class — *Giants in the Earth* — has made for itself in the general literature of the pioneer West, but also of the current interest in "regional fiction." The novels necessarily devote much attention to the struggle with nature and the problem of material well-being, but they also disclose the profound interest that the Norwegian immigrants had in religious questions. The concern of many Norwegian-Americans about Lutheran fundamentals was brought to the point of an emotional explosion in the early eighties by the American visit of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, poet, orator, and fearless controversialist. The article dealing with this curious episode, buttressed by many contemporary expressions of opinion, has more than an episodic importance, for it lights up a wide background. Significant, too, from the point of view of promoting understanding of the transplanting of religious views and of the fixing of their roots in American soil is the article explaining the origins of a Norwegian-American Lutheran college.

The inclusion of a bibliographical survey of recent writings dealing with Norwegian-American history marks a new departure in the present series. The interest and usefulness of this check list are so obvious that it is planned to give place to similar compilations in succeeding volumes of STUDIES AND RECORDS.

THEODORE C. BLEGEN

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ST. PAUL

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STUDIES AND RECORDS

VOLUME V

AN EARLY NORWEGIAN FUR TRADER OF THE CANADIAN NORTHWEST

By Hjalmar R. Holand

In the year 1819 Captain John Franklin was commissioned by the British government to fit out an expedition for the purpose of exploring the arctic coast of North America. Nothing was known of the vast region which lies between the mouth of the Coppermine River and the northern parts of Hudson Bay, and the principal purpose of this expedition was to explore the polar coast line east from the Coppermine as far as possible.

Captain Franklin left England in the spring of that year, and when winter came he had reached a Hudson Bay post far up on the Saskatchewan River. The next summer he pushed on and eventually reached Great Slave Lake. But here he met an unexpected obstacle. Not far beyond to the north lay the land of the Eskimos — a region of mystery and terror. No one was found who had penetrated very far into it; and his French-Canadian boatmen, hunters, and interpreters, as well as the local Indians all as one man refused to venture into this dark and gloomy land — they prized their lives more than the increased pay that the commander offered them.

In this dilemma Akaitcho, a prominent chief of a distant tribe of Indians, appeared and said that he and his best men would accompany the expedition to the Arctic Sea upon the sole but absolute condition that Franklin would also obtain the services of Willard Ferdinand Wentzel, the manager of a trading post near by, who could speak their language and in whom they had the utmost confidence. Captain Franklin immediately applied to Wentzel for his aid and it was granted. So potent was the reputation of this unknown man of the North that it even restored the courage of the French-Canadian *voyageurs* and they also agreed to proceed on the

same condition. With Wentzel as a sort of pilot and providence the expedition proceeded painfully onward to the Arctic Sea.[1]

This man whom circumstances for a time had appointed doorkeeper to the Canadian arctics was a Norwegian. In a brief biographical sketch of him Masson says: "Mr. Wentzel was a Norwegian" and, furthermore, Wentzel in one of his letters speaks of himself as a Norwegian.[2] The date of his birth and his birthplace are unknown, but he must have been in his twenties in 1799 when he first appeared on the outermost Canadian frontier. Twenty-seven years he spent in that desolate region; and he retired, apparently in good vigor, in 1826. He was therefore probably the first Norwegian resident in Canada.

During all these years Wentzel was a clerk in the employ of the Northwest Company. These "clerks" were local managers of the fur company's stations and Wentzel's field of operations was far out in the Athabasca and MacKenzie River region. Under him he had a few assistants, *voyageurs*, and hunters, while over him was the district factor. The "factors" were partners and proprietors of the company.

Wentzel also had fond expectations of being promoted to the noble company of proprietors, but in this he was disappointed. The proprietors of the Northwest Company were almost wholly made up of a more or less related ring of thrifty Scotchmen, and as Wentzel not only lacked all family influence but moreover was a "foreigner," his deserts went unrewarded, much though his services were appreciated. Ross Clark, an eminent fur trader, mentions Wentzel in this con-

[1] John Franklin, *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea*, 1:232 (London, 1824). Letters of Wentzel and documents concerning this expedition may be found in L. R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord Ouest, Lettres et Rapports Inédites*, 1:135–151 (Quebec, 1889).

[2] Masson, *Les Bourgeois, Lettres et Rapports Inédites*, 1:69. Wentzel's reference to himself as a Norwegian appears on page 105 of the same volume.

nection in his entertaining volume *Adventures on the Columbia River*:

> Wentzel had obtained a thorough knowledge of the manners, customs and language of the natives of the Athabasca region. He was an active, enterprising trader, — but having no family connections to place his claims in the prominent point of view which they ought to occupy, and being moreover of an honest, unbending disposition, his name was struck out of the honor list of favorite clerks intended for proprietors and he had the vexation to see many young men promoted over his head, several of whom had never slept a night with a hungry stomach or seen a shot fired in anger. Disgust followed disappointment and he was now [*in 1813*] proceeding to Canada [*Montreal*], determined, if justice were not rendered him by the directors, to quit the service of the Company forever.[3]

Wentzel's hopes were again disappointed, but he was partially placated by many assurances of esteem and was persuaded to return to his remote post by being promised the highest salary paid to any clerk — two hundred pounds per annum.

Masson gives another reason why Wentzel was not given a partnership. In his biographical sketch which precedes Wentzel's printed letters, he describes the fur trader as follows:

> He was a man of small stature, very unhandsome, but highly intelligent and of a jovial, keen, but sarcastic turn of mind; quick at finding out people's weak points and foibles, and taking great delight in mimicking them. This disposition of his deprived him of the kindly support of many who might doubtless have helped him on, and contributed possibly to prevent his promotion in the service of the Company.[4]

This seems, however, an unconvincing explanation, for Wentzel's caustic wit disporting itself for the edification of

[3] Ross Clark, *Adventures on the Columbia River*, 282, 283 (New York, 1832). Masson, in his sketch of Wentzel, says, "Mr. George Keith, one of the 'Partners' in the North West Company, and, later, one of the Chief Factors in the Hudson Bay Company, in his letters to Mr. Roderick MacKenzie, speaks in the most complimentary terms of his [*Wentzel's*] long years of service." *Les Bourgeois, Lettres et Rapports Inédites*, 1: 69.

[4] *Les Bourgeois, Lettres et Rapports Inédites*, 1: 69.

the *voyageurs* and Indians who gathered in his log cabin could hardly have been so pregnant as to disturb the deliberations of the board of directors two thousand miles away.

And so, because Wentzel was a poor and friendless man in a tribe of strangers, his deserts went unrewarded and he returned to his lonely cabin on the outermost edge of an inhospitable wilderness. No post could be more desolate or dangerous than the one he occupied. With only three or four Frenchmen and half-breeds he was left to the precarious mercy of the Indians from one year to another. Only once a year when the annual supply train came to deliver goods and take the peltries did he hear any news from the outside world. But the two thousand-mile canoe journey from Hudson Bay to Great Slave Lake was beset with innumerable difficulties and dependent on fickle weather conditions. Frequently therefore the toiling boatmen arrived with only half of the supplies or failed altogether to appear. Partly on account of this the station depended principally upon the Indians for food supplies. Often the Indians were unable to provide game enough for themselves, and then hunger and starvation was the lot of Wentzel and his men. In a letter dated April 30, 1811, he briefly describes one of these periods of starvation:[5]

> This last winter has been the most melancholy and most disastrous that could ever have befallen to any one single man to support without becoming torpidly stupid or totally senseless. Our distress and sufferings have been so great, that, of four Christians who were left at this establishment last Fall, I am the only survivor, and in a state more easily conceived than described, when I inform you that, from the 13th of December 1810 to the 12th January, we knew, nor saw any kind of meat but dressed moose deer skins and green parchment skins. At this date we received only seven plues[6] of fresh meat and were upon this little supply no less than eight mouths, of course it was but two meals.

[5] The letter is addressed to Roderick MacKenzie and is printed in Masson, *Les Bourgeois, Lettres et Rapports Inédites*, 1: 106–108.

[6] In fur trade parlance, a "plue" was a beaver-skin of good quality, or the value in commodities which such a skin would purchase.

From that period to the 11th of March, we lived upon nothing else but dried beaver skins; our number was then increased to thirteen, and fifteen during the space of 22 days. We destroyed in order to keep ourselves alive upward of three hundred beaver skins besides a few lynx and otter skins. Since that time we have a meal now and then; at intervals we are still two or three days without anything. All my men are dead of starvation. . . .

I am unable to describe my own position; all my Indians have starved more or less; from one small band only, I received news yesterday evening that five were dead of hunger; but of the majority of the Natives, I have not heard of since the month of November, they were already at that time gnawing the clothing they had upon themselves.

Hares have totally failed throughout all parts of the country and larger cattle have been uncommonly scarce at this place in particular, and the cold has been, this winter, the severest I have ever known. The ice on the Grand River [*the MacKenzie*] is no less than four and a half to five feet thick and at this late date none of the snow has yet disappeared in the woods.

But this letter is exceptional as Wentzel seldom refers to his tribulations and sufferings in his letters, but mostly deals with questions and conditions of public interest. In Masson's *Les Bourgeois* are printed fifteen of his letters covering about eighty large printed pages and written between 1807 and 1824. Nearly all these letters, remarkable for their excellence of style and clear thought, are addressed to Roderick MacKenzie.[7] That gentleman at one time conceived the idea of writing a history of the American Northwest. In order to get reliable information he addressed letters of inquiry to a number of factors and clerks. The reply from Wentzel is a lengthy epistle, a monograph of ten thousand words. It contains a description of the country, its waterways, mountains, minerals, fauna, flora, and climate. It also describes the Indians' mode of life, their customs, religion, character, government, habitations, food, hunting, and warfare. Finally it contains a

[7] Although his style is clear and sometimes even elegant, it is lacking in idioms and its Norwegianisms frequently bear witness to his Norwegian origin, as, for instance, "already at that time" in the above letter —a translation of the Norwegian *allerede ved den tid.*

vocabulary of three hundred Indian words.[8] It is dated March 27, 1807, and is a very valuable treatise on Indian life, inasmuch as it was written before the daily life of the Indians had been appreciably influenced by contact with white men. MacKenzie never carried out his project of writing a history of the Canadian Northwest, which may or may not have been any great loss, but judging by the sample that Wentzel has given of his own fitness for the task it is much to be deplored that he did not do so.

His letters contain many references to the more than strained relations between the Hudson Bay Company and the Northwest Company, telling of fights, imprisonments and murders.[9] Like other fur traders he had no sympathy with Lord Selkirk's early colonization plans. The following shows the then common attitude toward that premature undertaking:[10]

> Such is the information given by our gentlemen of the Red River concerning this land of *milk and honey*! Forty souls, principally Germans, have arrived at the Bay [*Hudson Bay*] for settlement; this number will only increase the number of victims sacrificed to the sinister views of a noble impostor. Surely, Government might institute an enquiry into the truth of all these circumstances, I mean the possibility of establishing and supporting a settlement in that country, as well as to ascertain whether the ground is fit for cultivation, and likely to yield subsistance [*sic*] to the number of poor families attracted thither by the plausible and fanciful insinuations of the Earl of Selkirk and of his agents. Certainly, the Legislature could not act a more generous part in support of humanity than rescue so many poor people from untimely death and sufferings scarcely to be believed.
>
> These Colonists imported with them the measles and chincough [*whooping cough*], which have been so fatal among the natives, that one fifth of the population of the country is said to have been destroyed all the way from Lac La Pluie to Athabasca,[11]

[8] This document is among the letters published by Masson. See *Les Bourgeois, Lettres et Rapports Inédites*, 1: 73–96.

[9] Masson, *Les Bourgeois, Lettres et Rapports Inédites*, 1: 122–129.

[10] Masson, *Les Bourgeois, Lettres et Rapports Inédites*, 1: 130.

[11] Captain Franklin, who traveled through this region about the same time, makes many references to the great mortality among the Indians from these two maladies. See his *Journey to the Polar Sea*, vol. 1.

so that it would seem as if Governor Semple, as he was styled, from the presage of what might happen, had prophesied this melancholy accident, when he wrote to Mr. Alexander MacDonnell at Qu'appelle, in 1816, that "he possessed means to make his power felt, the shock of which should reach from Montreal to Athabasca." Such is now the state of a country which once seemed to have attracted the envy even of sovereigns.

Among other evils which afflicted these early colonists of Lord Selkirk were grasshoppers. Wentzel gives the following account of this plague in 1819:

Respecting the Colony in Red River, accounts from that quarter mention that all their crops of the preceding season had been destroyed by grasshoppers, a kind of locust. Nothing escaped the voracity of these insects; wheat, barley, potatoes, all were destroyed, and fire having overrun the plains in Red River, buffaloes had become so scarce that none were to be found nearer than at the upper part of Pembina River, so that the poor colonists were reduced to great distress and want. Some of them have been running throughout the country up to Cumberland and *Lac La Pluie* [*about 500 miles*] to obtain seed for the ensuing season.[12]

These citations from Wentzel's letters may be terminated by a letter addressed to Lieutenant John MacKenzie, a son of Roderick MacKenzie, which in its form and contents is more self-revealing than the other letters.[13]

LAC LA PLUIE, August 4th, 1818

MY DEAR JOHN,

My departure for Montreal was so unexpected, in consequence of only twenty-four hours' notice from Mr. Thaine, that I could not obtain leave to go and pay my respects to Mr. and Mrs. MacKenzie, and now I am again so occupied that I cannot get an hour to write as I could wish to my friends in Montreal, for I have no less than all the Athabasca and Lesser Slave Lake departments' complement of men to equip and give advances to. Therefore you will, I am persuaded, pardon me for only writing a few lines as an acknowledgement of civilities from you which I shall always remember with secret pleasure and satisfaction.

You will be surprised to hear that we have now no less than five priests in the country, three of whom are gone to preach the Gospel amongst the settlers of Red River and convert the

[12] Masson, *Les Bourgeois, Lettres et Rapports Inédites*, 1: 129.

[13] This letter is printed in Masson, *Les Bourgeois, Lettres et Rapports Inédites*, 1: 152–153.

Natives preparatory to their entering the regions of the Blessed, and I am sure you will join me in wishing them all the success due to their laudable and enterprising spirit.

I have been to that land of promise and saw a great number of philosophers, proselytes to the Diogenes doctrine of stoicism, for the most part of the colonists have their habitation under the ground. Perhaps you will say this looks more like the Esquimaux mode of living; well, let it be so, I am willing, but I must say it is the most miserable condition a man can be reduced to in this life, for I am not one of those who think that existence is sweet in any shape.

No! No! I have not forgot *Miss La F. . . e*, nor the pleasant moments we have passed together, the thoughts of which now make me feel the miserable state to which I am subjected more acutely than I ever did before, although by seeing me *cracking my jokes* and *cutting my capers* a person might be led to believe that I was certainly the most thoughtless mortal in existence — which I consider a misfortune that I am not.

However let my situation be what it will, I shall always recollect your father's kindness with gratitude and Mrs. MacKenzie's condescension with reverence, while I am with unfeigned esteem and regard,

Very dear John,
Your sincere well wisher,
Willd. Ferd. Wentzel

Such were the circumstances and the personality of the man whose aid Captain Franklin had to invoke in order to carry out his instructions from the British government. By reason of his long experience in those subarctic wilds, his knowledge of Indian ways and dialects, and his general intelligence, Wentzel was acknowledged by both white men and Indians to be the very best man Franklin could get to assist in carrying on his important enterprise. It was therefore with great eagerness that Franklin hastened to Fort Providence on the MacKenzie River where Wentzel then was stationed. The preliminaries were quickly arranged and soon the expedition, with the addition of Wentzel and Akaitcho's Indians, pushed on to a lake about two hundred miles north of Great Slave Lake. As they there reached the northernmost fringe of the timber where sufficient fuel for the winter could be obtained,

a commodious winter camp was built, which was given the name of Fort Enterprise.

Wentzel's duties during the year he was with the expedition were, according to Captain Franklin, "the management of the Indians, the superintendence of the Canadian voyagers, the obtaining and the general distribution of the provision, and the issue of the other stores. These services he was well qualified to perform, having been accustomed to execute similar duties, during a residence of upwards of twenty years in this country. We also deemed Mr. Wentzel to be a great acquisition to our party, as a check on the interpreters, he being one of the few traders who speak the Chipewyan language." [14]

Besides all these duties Wentzel was also the principal entertainer of the large party during the long winter. Franklin says he was "an excellent musician" having great skill with the violin.[15] He also knew all the *voyageur* songs and melodies and with his fiddle led the score of French boatmen in boisterous singing which greatly enlivened the long arctic night.[16] Finally he had an almost endless repertoire of strange Indian tales which were equally interesting to the French and the English. One of these tales is here briefly summarized because of its similarity to the pathetic story of Thorgils Orrabeinsfostre in *Floamannasaga*.[17]

A young Indian of the Chipewyan tribe had separated from his fellows for the purpose of trenching beaver. Only his wife accompanied him and the time came when she gave birth to her first child. Three days later she died. Her husband

[14] Franklin, *Journey to the Polar Sea*, 1: 314.

[15] Franklin, *Journey to the Polar Sea*, 2: 38–39.

[16] Wentzel had made a collection of these *voyageur* songs and sent them to Roderick MacKenzie. Masson says, however, that they are "mostly obscene and unfit for publication." *Les Bourgeois, Lettres et Rapports Inédites*, 1: 71.

[17] Franklin's account of the narrative appears in *Journey to the Polar Sea*, 1: 244–245.

grieved deeply and in the depths of his sorrow he vowed that he would never take another woman to wife. However, he could not entirely yield himself to grief, for it now behooved him to provide nourishment for his little son. In order to do this he gladly undertook to nurse the child — a work which among his people was considered disgraceful to a warrior. He made a cradle for the child and swaddled it tenderly in soft moss. Then he prepared a strong soup from the best parts of a deer. But the child could not stomach this diet and screamed in agony. Then in anguish he prayed earnestly to the Great Spirit which gives life and pressed the child again and again to his breast. The force of the powerful emotion by which he was actuated produced the same effect in his case as it has done in some others which have been recorded; a flow of milk took place from his breast and he succeeded in bringing up the child.

Eventually he taught the boy to become a great hunter and found him a good wife in the tribe. He kept his oath never to take another wife and found his greatest delight in taking care of his grandchildren. When his friends and relatives objected to this and said such employment was unworthy of a great Indian, he told them that he had promised the Great Spirit who had saved his child that he would banish all pride and vanity from his life and ever seek humble tasks. As proof that the Great Spirit looked with favor upon his oath he mentioned that, while he always carried the child on his back when stalking the moose, the little one never made the slightest disturbance during the hunt. Wentzel had often talked with this old man and noticed that his left breast still had the enlargement which it got while he nursed the child.

At one time during the winter the party suffered from famine as game was very scarce. With loathing Captain Franklin and his officers saw the Indians dig in the snow and greedily devour the offal and skins of reindeer which had previously been thrown away during a period of plenty.

Little did they dream that the time was coming when they would pick over this refuse a second time.

By the middle of June there were a few signs of spring and the expedition started on its journey to the polar sea. But as the lakes and rivers were still frozen, it was necessary to draw their canoes over the ice for more than a hundred miles. Finally after an exhausting journey of five weeks they reached the Arctic Sea at the mouth of the Coppermine River, a distance of three hundred and fifty miles from Fort Enterprise.

This was as far as Wentzel and the Indians had contracted to accompany the expedition. A river was here named in parting honor of Wentzel, and with his dusky companions he set out on his return journey entrusted with dispatches from the commander and with instructions to collect a supply of game to be stored at Fort Enterprise in case the expedition should return that way.

With twenty companions Captain Franklin then set out eastward along the shore in two canoes on a journey which was to become one of the most terrible in the history of polar exploration. They had provisions for fifteen days and expected to find game and fish sufficient to sustain them. Very little game was found, however, and after a few weeks they had consumed the last of their provisions. They had proceeded only a few hundred miles along the shore when the first snow-flurries of fall warned them that it was time they should return. With the hope of finding game inland they determined to strike a bee line for Fort Enterprise across the barrens. But they found nothing at all except now and then some bones from a carcass devoured by wolves. These they burned and greedily devoured. This was their food together with old shoes and other leather parts of their equipment and some *tripe de roche* — a sickly looking moss that grew on rocks. Still worse than their gnawing hunger were the days when they could find nothing wherewith to make a fire and they lay for days shivering in snowdrifts. They became almost insane with

suffering, but the thought of reaching Fort Enterprise spurred them on. That camp in the edge of the timber now seemed to them a very paradise of comfort for there Wentzel, their good provider, would have a veritable storehouse of food and fuel. One after another was left behind frozen to death or unable to rise because of weakness from hunger. An Iroquois Indian who was a member of the party murdered one of the officers and as the Indian was suspected of cannibalism he was shot down like a mad dog.

At last, after six weeks of incredible suffering, all the merry Canadian boatmen had perished and only Captain Franklin and three of his companions from England were left. These four men were mere skeletons, able to walk or crawl only a mile or two per day. With amazing endurance they kept on and finally reached Fort Enterprise. But here they reached the climax of their misery: the fort was deserted and not a scrap of food in it! Nor was there any note from Wentzel explaining this strange circumstance. Had he basely deserted them?

There now remained nothing for them to do but to laboriously dig up the fragments of skin and bone which the Indians had rejected the previous winter. Each day they became appreciably weaker, Franklin was no longer able to help himself, and they knew their time had come. After some days or weeks of this, however, they were overjoyed to receive a visit from two Indians. They could not talk with them, but it was unnecessary, for the Indians brought them plenty of food and later conducted them to Akaitcho's camp where they were tenderly nursed back to health.

But what had become of Wentzel? With the rare forbearance which characterized Franklin, that gallant explorer withholds any bitter denunciation of Wentzel which he may have felt inclined to express, but no doubt Wentzel was the subject of many bitter invectives in the privacy of the conversation of the four sufferers.

It was not until months later when Franklin received his mail that he learned what had become of Wentzel. A letter from the latter reached him recounting a story of suffering second only to his own. When Wentzel and the Indians started homeward from the mouth of the Coppermine River the game suddenly seemed to have disappeared and soon they were starving. Like Franklin and his men they were forced to eat the very shoes they walked in. Thirteen Indians died from starvation. When they reached Fort Enterprise they had nothing to leave, for they were all destitute. Wentzel wished to leave a note at the camp telling of their distress, but not a scrap of paper was to be found. However, he found a split log which he smoothed with an axe and on this wrote a letter to Franklin. The slab with its writing was placed against Franklin's bed, so that he would be sure to see it when he came. This slab must have been accidentally used as fuel before it came to Franklin's attention. Thereupon Wentzel and the remaining Indians departed for the south hoping to find some game. When after many weeks of suffering Wentzel parted from Akaitcho, he impressed upon the chief the necessity of sending some meat to Fort Enterprise as soon as game could be found. Soon thereafter Akaitcho and his hunters caught up with a herd of caribou and he at once sent two of his men to Fort Enterprise with food, as has already been told.[18]

Like most Europeans in the wilderness, Wentzel married an Indian woman, by whom he had two children, a boy and a girl. The son's name was Alexander. He became a reputable carpenter and built the church at St. Norbert in 1853. He married a half-breed woman by whom he had four sons, who in 1890 were all living at St. Agathe.

Such, in brief, is the story of this first Norwegian settler in Canada. He was an advance scout of civilization at the very ends of the earth, but he filled his arduous post with patience, bravery and efficiency.

[18] Wentzel's letter is printed in Franklin, *Journey to the Polar Sea*, 2: 396–398.

IMMIGRANT WOMEN AND THE AMERICAN FRONTIER

Three Early "America Letters"

Translated and Edited by Theodore C. Blegen

INTRODUCTION

Though much is said in general terms about the rôle of women in the making of America, historians have tended to leave to novelists the important task of exploiting this theme in detail. Even in the history of the westward movement little place has been given to the achievements and influence of women, though a well known historian recently wrote that "no proper conception of the subjugation of the wilderness by the forces of civilization can be gained without an appreciation of the part that the women pioneers played."[1] The preoccupation of American historians with political development and the comparative neglect, until recently, of the domain of social history account in part for the "pall of silence" that historians have permitted to rest over the rôle of women in the American epic. It is possible, however, that there has been a scarcity of contemporary documents yielding the information necessary for a realistic handling of the subject.

The three documents herewith published date respectively from 1847, 1850, and 1866. They are translations of letters written by three Norwegian immigrant women in America to relatives in Norway. The originals were found by the present writer during the winter of 1928–29 while he was engaged in a search for materials in Norway bearing on American

[1] Arthur M. Schlesinger, *New Viewpoints in American History*, 132 (New York, 1922). Mr. Schlesinger devotes a chapter to "The Rôle of Women in American History." See also a notable passage in Frederic L. Paxson, *History of the American Frontier 1763–1793*, 114–115 (Boston and New York, 1924).

history. They are published as a slight contribution to the understanding of the part of the immigrant women in that great movement which subjugated the wilderness and laid the foundations for the subsequent building of the mid-American domain.[2] They are simple documents, written with no art save that which the simplicity of utter truth stamps upon them. Because of that very simplicity, however, they possess a peculiar value as authentic contemporary records of the experiences of pioneer women.

Jannicke Sæhle, who tells of her emigration from Norway in 1847, emerges from the record as a sprightly girl, cheerful, brave, with a sense of humor, undaunted by the experience of making her own way in the new world thousands of miles away from her old home. She evinces keen enjoyment of the American scene and proves herself alert and adaptable. She journeys to America as a maid, or caretaker, for an emigrant family, and is paid by receiving the products of three acres of land for a period of three years. In Wisconsin she leaves the log cabin at Koshkonong Prairie and makes her way to Madison, where she receives employment at wages of one dollar a week, with prospects of rising to $1.25 and eventually to the munificent figure of $1.50.

The experience of Henrietta Jessen, an emigrant of 1849, is much harder than that of Jannicke Sæhle. She comes to America as a wife and mother. Her heart is torn by homesickness but she comforts herself with thoughts of the future. Her husband is taken seriously ill, and for seven weeks, while

[2] In an article entitled "The First Lady of 'Restaurationen,'" published in *Souvenir "Norse-American Women" 1825–1925*, 12–18 (St. Paul, 1926), Miss Hanna Astrup Larsen tells about Martha Larson, the wife of Lars Larson, who led the "sloopers" of 1825. She also discusses two types of pioneer Norwegian-American women — the wives of the ministers who came out from Norway to the frontier settlements of the West, and the farmers' wives. The story of Elisabeth Koren, a minister's wife who accompanied her husband from Norway to Iowa in the fifties, is admirably told in *Fra Pioneertiden: Uddrag af Fru Elisabeth Korens Dagbog og Breve fra Femtiaarene* (Decorah, Iowa, 1914).

nursing him and caring for him, she does not lay off her clothes for sleep. She is sustained by a deep faith in God, by her own courage, and by her hopes for her children. She chronicles in simple language the friendliness and helpfulness of other immigrants to her in her trials. She does not neglect to discuss the prospects for Norwegians planning to come to America and she offers sound advice. From her letter one gets a clearly etched portrait of a brave woman, worthy of the best traditions of the women of the American frontier.

Over the grave of Guri Endreson stands a monument erected by the state of Minnesota in commemoration of her heroism at the time of the Sioux Massacre in 1862.[3] The story of what she did after an attacking party of Indians had slaughtered her husband and one son, wounded another son, and carried off two of her daughters as captives has been told and retold many times and is familiar to thousands of people.[4] Particular attention has been devoted to the tale of how she aided two severely wounded men from a settler's cabin to an ox-drawn wagon, after dressing their wounds and attending to their wants; then started with them, her small daughter, and her wounded son for Forest City, about thirty miles distant; guarded the party through an all-night vigil; and doggedly pushed on the next day until the haven of safety was reached. Though much has been published about these and other details in the saga of this frontier heroine, her own story of the events of 1862 has not been known. Indeed, it has been altogether unknown to historians that she ever wrote

[3] The Endreson letter was brought out by the writer in *Minnesota History*, 10:425–430 (December, 1929). In reprinting it some changes have been made in the introductory material and in the translation.

[4] See Victor E. Lawson, Martin E. Tew, and J. Emil Nelson, compilers, *Illustrated History and Descriptive and Biographical Review of Kandiyohi County, Minnesota*, 24, 110, 146 (St. Paul, 1905); Solon J. Buck and Elizabeth H. Buck, *Stories of Early Minnesota*, 217–223 (New York, 1926); and Agnes C. Laut, "Daughters of the Vikings — Guri Endreson," in *Outing*, 52:413–423 (July, 1908). Miss Laut's article is one of a series on "Pioneer Women of the West."

anything about the tragic happenings of that summer. She has been regarded as one of those inarticulate spirits who have left a legacy of courage expressed in action alone. The truth is that Guri Endreson did write her story — but she waited four years, and then set it down in the form of a letter to her relatives dwelling thousands of miles away in a lonely district of western Norway. The letter was treasured and preserved in the family circle.

A few discrepancies between Guri Endreson's own narrative and the well-known tale of her deeds will be apparent, and the reader will be struck by her omissions. Her story, it must be remembered, is written in the language of simplicity and sorrow and comes from a woman who would perhaps naturally understate or avoid mention of her own services to other people. Meanwhile, the letter supplies something that has been lacking from the familiar tale: a picture of a very human woman, with no inkling that she is a heroine, sustained in her sorrow by a pious faith in God, taking up the tasks of life again in the reconstruction period that followed the early sixties in Minnesota, retaining ownership of her land with a view to resumption of farming, and looking with courage to the future. For those who like to interpret human actions in the glowing terms of heroism, the spectacle of Guri Endreson four years after her harrowing Sioux War experience, making 230 pounds of butter from the summer product of her cows, writing encouragingly about America to her daughter in Norway, and holding aloft the promise of her faith, is not less impressive than that of the same woman helping others in the August days of 1862, when she was carrying the burden of fresh agony in her heart. Her letter is of interest not only for the light it sheds upon the character of Guri Endreson but also for the picture that it gives of the resumption of normal conditions in the area that had been visited by the horrors of the Sioux Massacre. It should be noted that the surname of the Endresons was Rosseland.

Lars Endreson Rosseland was the full name of Guri's husband. She signs her own name simply as "Guri Olsdatter."

JANNICKE SÆHLE TO JOHANNES SÆHLE, September 28, 1847

[Translation. Ms. in possession of Mr. John Sahle, Windber, Pennsylvania. Transcript, N. A. H. A. archives, Northfield, Minnesota. Copied through the courtesy of Mrs. Gran-Henricksen, Slemdal, V. Aker, Norway.]

KOSHKONONG PRAIRIE, September 28, 1847

DEAR BROTHER:

It seems to me that in my last letter to you, written from my former home in the old world, I hoped that from my new home in the new world I should be able to write to you with even greater happiness and contentment, and God has fulfilled this wish. As I wrote you, we did not leave our dear native land until April 24, as we had to remain eight days at Holmen in Sandvigen waiting for a number of passengers who had not yet arrived.

We sailed in the morning at seven o'clock, with fair wind and weather, and we had lost sight of the shores of our dear fatherland by half-past three, when the pilot left us. I remained on deck until six o'clock in the evening, but as the wind was sharp and cold I was not able to stay there any longer, but had to go down to the hold, where general vomiting had been going on for a long time. And after five minutes my turn came, also, to contribute my share to the Atlantic Ocean.

Still, what can I say? Not in all eternity can I sufficiently thank God, for the America journey was not for me what it was for many others. It seems now like a faint dream to me and as if through God's providential care I had been carried in protecting arms, for I was sick only four days, and even on these I went on deck now and then. I was not afraid, but slept just as peacefully as I had in the little room that I so recently had left behind. My traveling companions were just as lucky as I, but a number of passengers had to keep to their beds nearly the whole journey, for the weather was stormy almost the entire voyage and besides, it was so cold that there were few days when we could remain on deck for the whole day. But the wind had a good effect on conditions in the hold, which was well aired,

and warmer weather would have been less desirable. So, as we went steadily forward we hoped for the best, and our hopes were not disappointed. By the fourteenth of May we had already reached the Banks, where the captain and the skipper caught nine great cod, and for dinner on the Seventeenth of May we ate fish, though it was such a stormy day that we had to steady our plates with our hands, and not infrequently we were jerked backwards with our plates in our hands. In naming the skipper I can greet you from an old friend of our younger days, John Johannessen, who used to be in the service of Captain Fischer and once worked in his little fishing vessel. He is now much more alert as a seaman and looks much better than in the old days, but he is plagued by a long-standing malaria which he cannot get rid of, despite all the medicines which he is said to have used. His wife is dead. He has one married and three unmarried daughters. This was his fourth trip to this country, — and this one the fastest. As the wind continued favorable, the general opinion was that we would reach Staten Island, one mile from New York, by Whitsunday; but late in the evening before Whitsunday there came a calm, and a thick fog covered everything, so that it was necessary to keep up a constant ringing and shooting in case other sailing vessels should be in the vicinity. Later the fog lifted and we saw several vessels, and in the afternoon, about four o'clock, the captain saw a sailboat that resembled a pilot's vessel, and when he looked at it through his glass, it turned out to be so, to our delight, for the captain had not expected to get a pilot so late in the day. It was not long before the man was on board, and the next day near dinner time we anchored on American ground. The foggy weather continued and we were able to see only the delightful island, with its many lighthouses, pretty forts, and buildings, which stood out majestically among the charming stretches of woods.

After the good old doctor had come on board and we had all had the good fortune of being able to walk smartly past him, he gave his permission for the vessel to proceed immediately in to New York, where we arrived in the evening at five o'clock. The next day we made ready to go up to the town on the following day to look about, but as we had the children with us

and that day was very warm, we did not get very far. The skipper accompanied us as a guide who knew the place and as an interpreter. First we came to a large and beautiful park for pedestrians, outside of which were a great number of fruit dealers, and pleasant carriages for hire. We immediately took possession of one of these and had ourselves driven for a mile through the streets, for which we paid six pennies each, about the same as six Norwegian skillings. The next day we went to the museum, which we thoroughly enjoyed. Here we saw animals and birds, from the largest to the smallest, and many things, some of which I understood, some of which I didn't, portraits of all the generals that there have been in America, and finally an old man with a richly braided uniform who stood on a table without a head. After we had looked about us at this place, we were informed that a drama was being played, and when we reached the theater there was a representation of Napoleon's funeral, which was very beautiful to see. This came to an end at half-past five. A play was to be presented again from seven to ten, but we were already satisfied. We paid about thirty skillings (Norwegian).

On May 20 we left our good ship "Juno," with its brave crew, who said goodbye to us with a three-times-repeated hurrah. The captain accompanied us on board a steamer which was to carry us to Albany. He took us about to see things. It was like a complete house four stories high, and very elegantly furnished, with beautiful rugs everywhere. He now parted from us with the best wishes. Captain Bendixen treated us more like relatives than like passengers. He was very entertaining and was courteous in every respect.

The later journey was good beyond expectation. Things went merrily on the railroads. Once in a while the passengers, when we neared some of the noteworthy sights that we rushed past on the trip, would stick their heads out of the windows so that they might see everything, but one after the other of them had the misfortune to see his straw hat go flying away with the wind caused by the speed of the train.

On the third of June, after we had passed several cities which for lack of space I cannot tell about, we reached Milwaukee,

where we remained three days. We left Milwaukee on the seventh and came to Koshkonong on the ninth. Torjersen, after having made the acquaintance here of a worthy family named Homstad, from Namsen, who settled here last year and found this land the best after long travels, has now bought a little farm of forty acres of land, with a fairly livable log house and a wheat field of four and a half acres. This has brought him forty-five barrels of winter wheat, in addition to potatoes, beans, peas, more than a hundred heads of cabbage, cucumbers, onions in tremendous amounts, and many other kinds [of vegetables]. For this farm he paid $250, and with the farm followed respectfully four pigs.

After having lived here and having been in good health the whole time, I left on the sixteenth of August for Madison, the capital of Wisconsin, which is situated twenty-two miles from here. There I have worked at a hotel for five weeks, doing washing and ironing; and I enjoy the best treatment, though I cannot speak with the people. I have food and drink in abundance. A breakfast here consists of chicken, mutton, beef, or pork, warm or cold wheat bread, butter, white cheese, eggs, or small pancakes, the best coffee, tea, cream, and sugar. For dinner the best courses are served. Supper is eaten at six o'clock, with warm biscuits, and several kinds of cold wheat bread, cold meats, bacon, cakes, preserved apples, plums, and berries, which are eaten with cream, and tea and coffee — and my greatest regret here is to see the superabundance of food, much of which has to be thrown to the chickens and the swine, when I think of my dear ones in Bergen, who like so many others must at this time lack the necessaries of life.

I have received a dollar a week for the first five weeks, and hereafter shall have $1.25, and if I can stand it through the whole winter I shall get a dollar and a half a week, and I shall not have to do the washing, for I did not think I was strong enough for this work. Mrs. Morison has also asked me to remain in her service as long as she, or I, live, as she is going to leave the tavern next year and live a more quiet life with her husband and daughter, and there I also could live more peacefully and have a room by myself, and I really believe that so far as she

is concerned I could enter upon this arrangement, provided such a decision is God's will for me.

I am well and so far I have not regretted my journey to this country. I have now been with the Torjersens for four days and have written to Bergen and to you, and tomorrow I shall journey up to the Morisons', where I find myself very well satisfied. I have had the honor of sitting at their daughter's marriage dinner, and I ironed her beautiful bridal gown. She was in truth a lovable bride, beautiful, and good as an angel, and she has often delighted me with her lovely singing and her playing on the piano. She was married on the sixteenth of September and left on the seventeenth for Boston with her husband to visit her parents-in-law. And now, my dear Johannes, I must say farewell for this time. God bless you. Do not forget, I shall give you Torjersen's address, so that you may write me here. I greet you affectionately. Do not forget to thank God, on my behalf, who has guided me so well. I cannot thank Him enough myself.

JANNICKE

[*Written in margin:*]

I have now received from Torjersen for my services, three acres of land for cultivation for three years, and it is now planted with winter wheat — if God will give me something to harvest.

[*Superscription:*]

Mr. J. Sæhle, Copyist, Army Department, Christiania, via Hamburg, Norway, Europe.

[*Postmarks:*]

Hamburg 15/11 1847. Hamburg 16 11 1847. Havre 11/11 1847. Paid 10 Christiania W[isconsin] T[erritory] Oct. 1.

HENRIETTA JESSEN TO ELEONORE AND "DOREA" WILLIAMSIN, February 20, 1850

[Translation. Ms. in possession of Mr. M. Hansen, Stavanger, Norway. Transcript, N. A. H. A. archives, Northfield, Minnesota.]

MILWAUKEE, February 20, 1850

MY DEAR SISTERS DOREA AND NOREA:

Fate has indeed separated me from my native land and all that was dear to me there, but it is not denied me to pour forth my

feelings upon this paper. My dear sisters, it was a bitter cup for me to drink, to leave a dear mother and sisters and to part forever in this life, though living. Only the thought of the coming world was my consolation; there I shall see you all. Of the emigrants from Arendal, I think, probably none went on board with a heavier heart than I, and thanks be to the Lord who gave me strength to carry out this step, which I hope will be for my own and my children's best in the future. So I hope that time will heal the wound, but up to the present I cannot deny that homesickness gnaws at me hard. When I think, however, that there will be a better livelihood for us here than in poor Norway, I reconcile myself to it and thank God, who protected me and mine over the ocean's waves and led us to a fruitful land, where God's blessings are daily before our eyes.

When you have received these lines, dear No and Do, I must ask you to write my dear mother as quickly as possible and to tell her that I have had the joy of receiving her letter by the post. That was the greatest day of happiness I have had since I came to America. Greet Mother and Ma and Georgia and say that they must not expect any letter from me before midsummer. Tell Mother that I have not received the letter she sent by the brig "Juno." Since we came to America neither my children nor I have been sick abed a day, for which God is to be thanked, who strengthens my body and my poor soul. I have not had so pleasant a winter as I might have had. My husband fell ill in the middle of September and had to keep to his bed until eight days before Christmas. Then he began to sit up a little and now he is up most of the day, but he is so weak that he cannot think of beginning to work for two months and perhaps not then. The doctor calls the sickness dysentery. Yes, my poor Peder has suffered much in this sickness. The doctor gave up all hope of his life and we only waited for God's hour, but at twelve o'clock one night his pulse changed and the doctor said that now it was possible that he would overcome the sickness, but he said that it would be very stubborn and [the recovery] slow. That sickness I can never forget. Think, in one terrible day and night my husband lost eight pots of blood, that was the night before he was near death, and I was alone with him and my children. But

afterwards there were a few of the Norwegians who were so kind as to help me for a time watching over him, the one relieving the other. For seven weeks I was not out of my clothes. From these lines you will see that I have experienced a little in America; but now that the worst is over, I thank the almighty Father from my innermost heart, who has cared for us and met our daily needs. We have lacked nothing. Good food and drink we have had daily. I believe I may say that even if I had been in my own native town I would hardly have received the help I have had here and I receive two dollars a week (that is, in goods). I will not speak of my own kind family, what they would have done for me, but I mean the public. There are four Norwegian families quite near where we live who have been very sympathetic with me in my misfortune and have proved their faith by their works; they have given me both money and articles for the house. Among these four families there is a man named Samuel Gabrielsen, who has been like a rare good brother to me. I will not say how much that kind man has given us, for he has told me that I should not tell anyone. "I give to you now because I know that it will be a help to you, but I do not give to be praised." He knows my brother-in-law well; in fact, Gabrielsen says that Williamsin is the best man he knows in the world and all the Norwegians whom I talk with say the same.

There are a large number of Norwegians here from the vicinity of Farsund, most of them seamen. It is the sailors who are paid best in America and all the sailors get rich. Here an ordinary seaman gets from eighteen to twenty-five dollars a month. Clerks have gone without work here this winter and carpenters and shoemakers are the artisans that are best paid. Glass workers and tailors are not able to make a living for their families. This is easy to understand when you know that you can get window panes of any size and at small cost, and it does not take much intelligence to put in a pane.

My dear sisters, when I last wrote to Farsund it was farthest from my thoughts that I ever should be separated so far from my native land and my home. How often I think of you and of your innocent angels, whom I never have seen and never shall in this life; but in my thoughts I seem to see your innocent little

ones. From Mother's letter I learn that all is well with my dear ones in Farsund, and this gives me much happiness. I hope that you all, with God's help, will be strong and in good health when these lines reach you. Your butter tub, Norea, I have used daily since I came to America, but it has not held butter since I left my native land. It would not be well if I should lack needed articles in a foreign country where I have neither mother nor sisters to comfort me in dark times such as this winter when my dear Peder was sick, and I suppose I have often wished that I were surrounded by my dear ones. I suppose it is a little strange to receive a dress in Norway and not to thank [the giver] for it before one comes to America, but better late than never. I will therefore, dear Dorea and your husband, thank you both for the dress that you gave me last summer for my Georgine S. She still has it in good condition and when it can no longer be used it will be put away as a remembrance of Uncle Perneman and Aunt Dorea in Norway. The greatest pleasure I have is talking with the children about their grandmother and aunts and uncles in Norway; that is our daily talk, and what pleases me so specially is that from the smallest to the largest they answer me with a happy smile as soon as I begin to talk about home in Norway, about grandmother and aunts.

Seval greets "Aunty" Norea, but he says he cannot remember aunty. He received the blue socks from Aunt Norea, and he is so glad to look at them when I unlock the chest, then he is quick to ask if he may see his little socks. I shall not praise my own child, but I surely believe that if I live he will give me happy days, he is so tender and understanding for me. And Søren is an unusual little fellow for his age, he has kept us supplied with wood this winter and works like a little horse. George is a little rascal; Georgine is large for her age; everybody asks if they are twins.

Tell Mother that I long since looked up Christiane Lydeman. She is well off and greets Aunt. I am often with Christiane, she is kind and pleasant to me.

The winter here in America is just as long as in Norway and much colder, but the nights are not so long. At Christmas time we had light until five o'clock in the afternoon. Ask Margaret

to tell Peder Mekelsen that I advise him to go to New York and from there by canal boat to Buffalo and then by steamboat here to Milwaukee. Nels Klaapene, the sail maker, lives here in the vicinity; his wife's name is Ingebaar. I am writing with a pen and the paper says stop. And now in conclusion I ask God's blessing upon you all. God guard you from all evil in your peaceful homes. A thousand greetings to you, Norea, with your husband and children, and you, Dorea, with your husband and children, from me, my husband, and my children.

Your devoted sister,
HENRIETTA JESSEN

[*Postscript:*]

Greet my dear Mother a thousand times, M. and her children, and Mrs. Hal and Mrs. Ramlu, with their husbands and children. Goodbye, goodbye, all my dear ones. God bless you.

HENRIETTA

[*Superscription:*]

Madm Eleonore Williamsin, Hetland, pr Farsund, Norway, Europe

[*Postmarks:*]

Milwaukee, Wis. Feb. [?]. Hamburg 22/2/1850

GURI ENDRESON TO RELATIVES, December 2, 1866

[Translation. Ms. in possession of Mr. Arne Larsen Rosseland, Kvam, Hardanger, Norway. Transcript and photostat, N. A. H. A. archives, Northfield, Minnesota.]

HARRISON P. O., MONONGALIA CO., MINNESOTA,[5]
December 2, 1866

DEAR DAUGHTER AND YOUR HUSBAND AND CHILDREN, AND MY BELOVED MOTHER:

I have received your letter of April fourteenth, this year, and I send you herewith my heartiest thanks for it, for it gives me great happiness to hear from you and to know that you are alive, well, and in general thriving. I must also report briefly to you how things have been going with me recently, though I must ask

[5] The northern half of the present Kandiyohi County constituted Monongalia County from 1858 to 1870.

you to forgive me for not having told you earlier about my fate. I do not seem to have been able to do so much as to write to you, because during the time when the savages raged so fearfully here I was not able to think about anything except being murdered, with my whole family, by these terrible heathen. But God be praised, I escaped with my life, unharmed by them, and my four daughters also came through the danger unscathed. Guri and Britha were carried off by the wild Indians, but they got a chance the next day to make their escape; when the savages gave them permission to go home to get some food, these young girls made use of the opportunity to flee and thus they got away alive, and on the third day after they had been taken, some Americans came along who found them on a large plain or prairie and brought them to people. I myself wandered aimlessly around on my land with my youngest daughter and I had to look on while they shot my precious husband dead, and in my sight my dear son Ole was shot through the shoulder.[6] But he got well again from this wound and lived a little more than a year and then was taken sick and died. We also found my oldest son Endre shot dead, but I did not see the firing of this death shot. For two days and nights I hovered about here with my little daughter, between fear and hope and almost crazy, before I found my wounded son and a couple of other persons, unhurt, who helped us to get away to a place of greater security.[7] To be an eyewitness to these things

[6] For a brief account of Lars Endreson, see Lawson, Tew, and Nelson, *Kandiyohi County*, 110.

[7] Solomon R. Foot, one of the two men whose heroic rescue is attributed to Guri Endreson, tells the story himself in great detail in Lawson, Tew, and Nelson, *Kandiyohi County*, 106–110. He, like his comrade, Oscar Erikson, had been badly wounded. Of Mrs. Endreson he writes: "She washed our bodies, bandaged our wounds and gave us every possible comfort. Fortunately my wagon stood so near the cabin that the Indians had not ventured to take it. She drew this as near the door as possible, put into it bedding, blankets and other things we might need. She assisted us into it, propped us up in a half reclining position, placed my gun by my side, hitched the young unbroken oxen to it and started." At night "Mother Endreson supplied all our wants and again bathed our wounds" and she "spent a sleepless night watching over us, ever on the lookout for the savage foe." In view of this evidence, Guri Endreson's statement that she found two persons, unhurt, who helped her to escape, seems inexplicable.

and to see many others wounded and killed was almost too much for a poor woman; but, God be thanked, I kept my life and my sanity, though all my movable property was torn away and stolen. But this would have been nothing if only I could have had my loved husband and children — but what shall I say? God permitted it to happen thus, and I had to accept my heavy fate and thank Him for having spared my life and those of some of my dear children.

I must also let you know that my daughter Gjærtru has land, which they received from the government under a law that has been passed, called in our language "the Homestead law," and for a quarter section of land they have to pay sixteen dollars, and after they have lived there five years they receive a deed and complete possession of the property and can sell it if they want to or keep it if they want to. She lives about twenty-four American miles from here and is doing well. My daughter Guri is away in house service for an American about a hundred miles from here; she has been there working for the same man for four years; she is in good health and is doing well; I visited her recently, but for a long time I knew nothing about her, whether she was alive or not.

My other two daughters, Britha and Anna, are at home with me, are in health, and are thriving here. I must also remark that it was four years on the twenty-first of last August since I had to flee from my dear home, and since that time I have not been on my land, as it is only a sad sight because at the spot where I had a happy home, there are now only ruins and remains left as reminders of the terrible Indians. Still I moved up here to the neighborhood again this summer. A number of families have moved back here again so that we hope after a while to make conditions pleasant once more.[8] Yet the atrocities of the Indians are and will be fresh in memory; they have now been driven beyond the boundaries of the state and we hope that they never will be allowed to come here again. I am now staying at

[8] The resumption of farming in this region started on a small scale in 1864. "In the summer of 1864 a few settlers ventured beyond the soldiers' patrol lines into Kandiyohi county, where they sowed and harvested a crop during the summer." Lawson, Tew, and Nelson, *Kandiyohi County*, 33.

the home of Sjur Anderson, two and a half miles from my home. I must also tell you how much I had before I was ruined in this way. I had seventeen head of cattle, eight sheep, eight pigs, and a number of chickens; now I have six head of cattle, four sheep, one pig; five of my cattle stayed on my land until February, 1863, and lived on some hay and stacks of wheat on the land; and I received compensation from the government for my cattle and other movable property that I lost. Of the six cattle that I now have three are milk cows and of these I have sold butter, the summer's product, a little over two hundred and thirty pounds; I sold this last month and got sixty-six dollars for it. In general I may say that one or another has advised me to sell my land, but I would rather keep it for a time yet, in the hope that some of my people might come and use it; it is difficult to get such good land again, and if you, my dear daughter, would come here, you could buy it and use it and then it would not be necessary to let it fall into the hands of strangers. And now in closing I must send my very warm greetings to my unforgetable dear mother, my dearest daughter and her husband and children, and in general to all my relatives, acquaintances, and friends. And may the Lord by his grace bend, direct, and govern our hearts so that we sometime with gladness may assemble with God in the eternal mansions where there will be no more partings, no sorrows, no more trials, but everlasting joy and gladness, and contentment in beholding God's face. If this be the goal for all our endeavors through the sorrows and cares of this life, then through his grace we may hope for a blessed life hereafter, for Jesus sake.

Always your devoted

GURI OLSDATTER

Write to me soon.

FROM NEW YORK TO WISCONSIN IN 1844

By Johan Gasmann

Translated and Edited by Carlton C. Qualey

INTRODUCTION

The document herewith translated tells of a journey made from New York to Wisconsin in the summer of 1844 by Johan Gasmann, captain of the "Salvator," a vessel engaged in the emigrant carrying trade between Norway and America. It was published contemporaneously in several Norwegian newspapers and was doubtless read by numerous prospective emigrants in its day. From the files of one of these papers as preserved in the library of the University of Oslo was secured the transcript on which the present translation is based.[1]

In a period when conditions on board the packets that brought European immigrants to the United States were often unspeakably bad, Captain Gasmann appears to have held humane and enlightened views about emigrant transportation. Emigration problems occasioned a governmental investigation in Norway as early as 1843, and J. Gasmann, a vice consul and broker at Porsgrund and a brother of the captain, was appointed a member of the investigating commission.[2] To him Captain Gasmann wrote a letter on December 18, 1843, describing conditions on the "Salvator" and making suggestions as to emigration.[3] He advocated for the emigrant traffic the use of large and well-equipped vessels only, made suggestions about the size of sleeping quarters for passengers on

[1] The transcript is among the documents secured by Theodore C. Blegen during his residence in Norway in 1928–29 as a fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation of New York.

[2] Blegen, "The Norwegian Government and the Early Norwegian Emigration," in *Minnesota History*, 6: 118 (June, 1925).

[3] The letter is in the archives of the Social Department of the Norwegian government at Oslo, in Lovkontor: Utvandringen, Kong. Prop. 1845, folder 3; and a transcript is among the emigration materials in the archives of the Norwegian-American Historical Association at Northfield, Minnesota.

board ships, and gave advice concerning adequate food and water supplies to be provided for the ocean voyage by the emigrants. Among the practices maintained in the interest of emigrant welfare on board the "Salvator" were insistence upon proper attention by the passengers to their personal hygiene, frequent scrubbing of sleeping quarters, and adequate ventilation. The passengers were also required to exercise frequently on deck. Captain Gasmann urged that prospective emigrants should be warned of the machinations of unscrupulous agents in New York, and he concluded his letter by recommending Wisconsin as a place in which to settle.

Another brother of Captain Gasmann played a prominent rôle in the early history of Norwegian emigration. This was Hans Gasmann, a former member of the Norwegian *Storthing* and the owner of a large estate in Gjerpen. His decision to sell his estate and emigrate, announced in the fall of 1842, caused considerable comment in Norway, for it was unusual for men of his prominence and position to join the throngs setting out for the West. Many people who had been torn by doubt as to emigration, particularly about the reliability of the "America letters," felt that the word of such a responsible man as Hans Gasmann would be decisive, once he had had an opportunity to examine conditions in the United States. Consequently such persons awaited his reports with eager interest. The popular interest in Gasmann's emigration is evidenced by the publication in a contemporary newspaper of a poem entitled "To Hans Gasmann," written by the eminent poet, Pavels Hielm.[4] On May 12, 1843, with his family of thirteen children, Hans Gasmann set sail from Porsgrund for

[4] An account of Hans Gasmann, accompanying the text, and an English translation of this poem will appear in a forthcoming volume of Norwegian emigrant songs to be translated and edited by Theodore C. Blegen and Martin Ruud. References to Gasmann occur in the letters of Ole Munch Ræder, edited by Gunnar J. Malmin as *America in the Forties*, 35, 105, 108 (Norwegian-American Historical Association, *Travel and Description Series*, vol. 3 — Minneapolis, 1929).

New York on the vessel of which his brother Johan was captain. After his arrival in America, he went west and joined the Pine Lake settlement in Wisconsin, which had been founded two years earlier by the Swedish pioneer immigrant, Gustaf Unonius. As time went on, Hans Gasmann wrote a number of letters to friends in Norway commenting on American life and on the question of emigration. He was well satisfied with his new home, and his optimistic reports, coupled with his known integrity, doubtless influenced many Norwegians to come to the United States. His choice of Wisconsin for settlement helps one to understand the interest of his brother the captain in that region. It was, in fact, in order to visit the Wisconsin pioneer that the captain made the journey recorded in the following document.

Early in 1844 Captain Gasmann, who apparently had been reported publicly as entertaining a different view of emigration from that of his brother Hans, expressed the opinion that the latter had not yet lived in America long enough to be in a position to express a convincing judgment. As for himself, he professed to be quite skeptical about the advantages of emigration.[5] In the summer of the same year, however, he found opportunity to study the situation at first hand. After having docked his ship, with its load of immigrants, he discovered that he would have some time at his disposal. He therefore determined to make a trip to Wisconsin to visit his brother. This journey to the American interior seems to have changed Captain Gasmann's opinions about emigration and the opportunities for emigrants in America, for in a letter written from New York after his return from the West, he spoke enthusiastically about the beauties of the Wisconsin country and the advantages that it offered.[6] Later he wrote the fuller account of his journey that is herewith translated.

[5] *Bratsberg Amts-Correspondent*, February 22, 1844; *Drammens Tiden*, February 25, 1844. Extracts from these newspaper items are among the materials referred to *ante*, n. 3.

[6] Johan Gasmann to Jacob Müller, August 1, 1844, in *Bratsberg Amts-Correspondent*, September 3, 1844. A transcript of this letter is in the collection referred to *ante*, n. 3.

Captain Gasmann's narrative possesses distinct historical value. It gives a picture of certain aspects of the American scene in the middle forties that is of general value for students of American history. It describes in detail the route followed not only by thousands of immigrants but also by vast numbers of native Americans who joined the westward trek in that period. It has a special flavor arising from the fact that it records the observations of a sea captain. At Buffalo, for example, Gasmann took occasion to speak to the owners of a fleet of Great Lakes sailing vessels, especially requesting their careful attention to the Norwegian immigrants. It must not be forgotten, finally, that the report, through its contemporary newspaper publication in Norway, was among the writings that introduced America into the consciousness of the Norwegians in the first half of the nineteenth century.

Captain Gasmann was a keen observer and recorded his observations carefully. Because of his travels and his wide experience, he was able to make telling comparisons and generalizations. On the whole, he displayed great admiration for American institutions and customs. Indeed, he was perhaps at times carried away by his enthusiasm. Generally, however, his comments were impartial and penetrating and thus contrast favorably with many of the "America letters" of the time.

FRAGMENTS OF SHIP CAPTAIN JOHAN GASMANN'S RECORD OF A JOURNEY FROM NEW YORK TO WISCONSIN IN THE SUMMER OF 1844

[In *Bratsberg-Amts Correspondent*, February 3, 10, 27, March 3, 6, 10, 1845; also in *Christianssandsposten*, February 7, 14, 28, March 13, 17, 1845.]

On several of my long trips I have recorded much of that which especially attracted my attention, and so also I did on this journey, not for the purpose of publication but only for the perusal of my friends and acquaintances, and more particularly for my own future satisfaction. I had about fourteen days to spend, for after having completed arrangements for a cargo for the ship in New York, I found that I could not get it loaded in

less than two or three weeks. These I made use of in seeing a little of America.

I took passage on the steamboat "Knikkenbokken" [Knickerbocker?] from New York to Albany, a distance of about twenty-three Danish miles up the Hudson River. This is one of the largest vessels sailing on the Hudson and certainly is the finest to be seen. It is 290 feet long with cabins on three decks. To describe its entire arrangement is impossible, but it is a beautiful floating hotel or palace which can offer commodious quarters for nine hundred to a thousand passengers. We were nine hours en route and paid one and one-half dollars. The Hudson is one of the most picturesque rivers in the world. Its banks reveal alternating landscapes, beautiful estates, and pleasant rural villages, together with various larger towns such as Ponghkupon [Poughkeepsie], Kingston, Catskill, Hudson, and Newburg.

After passing for a considerable distance through a very hilly region, which greatly resembled a Norwegian sound, we came to West Point, where the river widened into a large fjord encircled by the most picturesque landscape, with stretches of level country, hills, and in the background, heights resembling mountains clothed with beautiful forests. Immediately to the left, on the western bank, is West Point, where one sees a number of fine buildings like palaces. This is the United States war school or military academy and is also the arsenal for the state of New York. The place has a most attractive location. To the right one sees two larger towns; one of them, Hudson, lying on a height, has a very charming appearance. To the left, farther ahead, one sees the Catskill Mountains, which are about four thousand feet in height and extend to a steep precipice beside the Hudson, from which they rise about three thousand feet. At a height of about twenty-five hundred feet, there is a hotel which looks like a patch of snow. People from New York go there in the summer time. At few places can a more beautiful view be found. The sides of the mountain are clad with light-green woods to over half its height and even above that it looks green. On the top, snow lies until far into the summer. The landscape is very beautiful. One can scarcely find anything so lovely in Europe, for in the southern

lands in Europe the hills are not wooded and appear brown and scorched. Here, on the contrary, everything is lively and green.

On the whole, that part of America which I have seen has a greener and fresher appearance than any country in Europe. Everything appears so vigorous. The Hudson River swarms with steamboats and sailing vessels. There is activity everywhere, both on land and water. The steamboats with their star-spangled flags and long smoke streamers whiz past each other, filled with thousands of well-dressed and attractive looking people. The sound of music of horns and other instruments comes from them over the water. Schooners, sloops, and numerous smaller vessels skim about like flies on the broad surface of water. All this is so grand, so beautiful, that anyone who enjoys living must be glad and cheerful — and the more so when one recalls that about a hundred years ago there were only a few miserable wigwams or Indian huts here, and on the river only solitary birchbark canoes wherein bloody Indians sat with their tomahawks and scalping knives, ready to torture and to murder their enemies. What a transformation in such a short time! If a man does not become enthusiastic about all this, then the greatest human enterprises have no value. I confess that as a seaman, after a long sea voyage, I perhaps found everything more wonderful than it might appear to me if I remained here for a longer period of time. But is it not so everywhere? The most beautiful landscape loses its attractiveness in our eyes the longer we see it. I have, however, seen so much that I can make comparisons. I have seen nothing as beautiful as the Hudson unless it might be the Bosporus at Constantinople, but even that does not come up to this. And what a difference in the people who live there!

I arrived at Albany where the steamboat navigation ended. Albany, a town of about thirty thousand inhabitants, is fine looking, with wide, clean streets. The main street is, in my opinion, finer than Broadway in New York. At the upper end of this street is a stately building with a cupola. This is the meeting place for the representatives of the state of New York and is the capitol of this state. The governor resides here and this palace is also called the capitol. It is a fine building of cut stone, with a pillared façade of white marble. From Albany I went by rail to

Buffalo, at the eastern end of Lake Erie, a distance of seventy-five Danish or three hundred English miles. If one has time enough, it is cheaper to go by the Erie Canal on a *treck-schuyt*[7] drawn by horses. The cars in which one travels on the railroad are very comfortably furnished. Each is about twenty-five feet in length, nine feet in width, and seven feet in height, and has windows the full length of the car as in a coach. One sits on cushioned seats placed crosswise in the car, one row on each side so that two passengers sit beside each other. In the middle there is an aisle. At both ends there is a door with a balcony or platform outside which has an iron railing around it. Here, if one has the conductor's permission, one may stand outside and look about. Every third hour we stopped to take on fuel and water, and now and then at a nearby elegant restaurant, or rather two, one for gentlemen and one for ladies, where all possible kinds of refreshments stood in readiness — but the stop was only for fifteen minutes. At noon and breakfast-time a person had, on the contrary, a good hour. As a precaution, one or two baggage cars are always placed between the locomotive and the passenger cars in order to prevent accidents in case the steam engine jumps the track.

The route from Albany runs first through extensive stretches of level land, past many rural villages and farms. There is well-cultivated land everywhere, with fields and meadows as far as eye can see. There are wooded areas here too, largely made up of oak and other deciduous trees. Fir and other evergreens are less common. The rural villages and the solitary farms are for the most part built up of wood. The houses are roofed as are ours and the buildings are usually painted white and red. Many of the solitary farms resemble our Norwegian farmsteads [*Bøndergaarde*], painted red with white window frames. Everywhere one sees orchards and flowers about the houses. Everything has something new — something distinctive about it. It is not England, not France's straw roofs, and not Norway, but something distinctly new. In appearance the country is like Denmark with its level land, but the orchards display the luxu-

[7] A *treck-schuyt* is a covered boat designed to be towed, especially a canal boat.

riance of France. The people resemble the English in dress and manners but are, like the French, more courteous and sociable. The Americans usually roof their houses with shingles which they coat with a composition of some kind so that they resemble slate, which I at first took them to be. The churches are also built of wood but are of various styles, some with steeples, some with cupolas, and some without steeples. All are painted white. The Americans roof the churches with heavy galvanized sheet iron, which shines and glitters in the sunlight and gives a beautiful effect amidst the green woods. At Schennlady [Schenectady] one enters upon a broad valley called the Mohawk Valley, which extends eighteen miles westward towards Rochester. This valley is everywhere well-cultivated. Through the middle of it flows, with a rapid current, a river, the Mohawk, which at one place has several considerable falls. Here the valley is compressed between high mountain ridges so that it is only a little wider than the river itself. Otherwise the width of the valley varies from one-half to one mile — yes, occasionally more than that. Several tributary valleys lead into it and the view is changed greatly thereby. The valley rises higher and higher on both sides until very high mountain ridges limit the view. The whole constitutes a lovely and colorful landscape. But unfortunately, night came all too soon and darkness shut off the view, so that I was unable to see everything no matter how much I wished to do so. I am often tempted not to venture out upon the monotonous and boresome sea, which never offers any prospect more diverting than seeing one black swell followed invariably by another in consecutive endlessness — not a very cheerful or soul-inspiring view. After one has traveled through this valley, one comes up on higher land, which again stretches out in prairie and hills.

I arrived at Rochester at night and left again at dawn so that I was able to see little or nothing of the town. But since I stayed there a whole Sunday on my return trip, I shall briefly note something about the town. Rochester is situated beside a river which within the town itself has a fall of over ninety feet and which is utilized to operate mills and other machines. In the town a stone bridge has been built over the river and there is a long wooden bridge above the town. Rochester is a very beautiful

city, with broad, fine streets and remarkably fine buildings, scarcely inferior to those of New York itself. The houses resemble those of France more than those of England, have tall windows, and are decorated with cornice work and other ornamentation. The town has about thirty thousand inhabitants. There are seven beautiful churches and many large and elegant hotels, the latter being necessary because both the Erie Canal and the railroad pass through Rochester. Not far from Rochester is Lake Ontario, the wide-spread surface of which one sees just before entering the town.

After a three-hour journey thence, I arrived in Buffalo. The route leads across areas which are partly overgrown with forests, miles in extent. The land appears virgin or only just coming under cultivation, for tree stumps still remain in many places. I suppose that the soil here is not of the best, for pine trees grow here in large numbers, especially firs, and the soil appears sandy. It was, at all events, the poorest country I saw on the whole trip. The city of Buffalo is situated beside a small bay of Lake Erie, and this forms a fairly good harbor. The lowest part of the town lies so low that it is subject to floods in times of heavy storms from the northwest, but the larger part lies on the slope of a hill. It has a large wide main street which extends about one English mile right through the town and is lined by large and beautiful buildings. Here, as in Rochester, there are many huge hotels for travelers. Therefore, as soon as one arrives on the train at the large shed or station, one is immediately surrounded by servants or footmen from the various taverns or hotels, and one must hold fast to one's luggage so that it is not snatched by these eager individuals, not that they wish to steal it but in order that they may convey it to their respective employers' houses. Light wagons and carioles stand ready to take the traveler anywhere he wishes. Each of these servants or footmen recommends his master's hotel as well as he can. German menservants especially are employed in this way. One cannot say that it is expensive to lodge here. The taverns or hotels are just as elegant as in the larger towns in France. The furnishings are more French than English, just as, on the whole, America is more French than English. There is a mixture of both, however, and

also something distinctive. The Americans certainly are not less advanced than either of the nationalities mentioned.

Buffalo has about eighteen thousand inhabitants, but it is not so attractive as Rochester. There is a great deal of activity and life here. All goods which come from the western states are landed here; travelers pass through by the thousands; the harbor is full of freighters, brigs, schooners, and sloops which sail the larger lakes. Along the shore are built large wooden warehouses painted white (resembling in that respect Bergen's harbor). Here there were large numbers of seamen, among whom I met many Scandinavians and Frenchmen. The prodigious number of flour barrels and provisions which are loaded here on the canal boats to be taken to New York makes one realize at once that fertile lands surround these lakes. Americans are perpetually active and always seem to be in a hurry; indeed, a more enterprising people cannot be found anywhere. One sees few people out walking merely for the sake of walking, for everyone has something to do. It is only in the evening, a little after sunset, that gentlemen and ladies fill the streets. Buffalo is not far from the Canadian boundary. Just outside the town there is a fort with a little garrison, the soldiers of which, like the English, have red uniforms. In three hours one may travel from Buffalo to the remarkable Niagara Falls, where a tremendous volume of water is precipitated from a height of 160 feet, but time did not permit me to see this.

As one looks out from Buffalo over Lake Erie, it is scarcely credible that this is only a lake, for no land is visible on the horizon, and ships cruise by each other here as on the ocean, — and yet this lake lies more than six hundred feet above sea level, and consequently almost as high above the Hudson River and the Erie Canal. The railroad also mounts in the same degree over a distance of about seventy-five miles.

Upon my arrival at Buffalo, I looked up Hughes and Company, who are the leading owners of steamships on the Lakes or else the directors of them as well as a large number of sailing vessels and other ships. Hence, a large part of the immigrants pass, so to speak, through their hands. I asked these gentlemen to take care that our countrymen be transported in comfort and

not crowded together too much in the schooners. I explained to them that our farmers [*bønder*], in spite of their shabby appearance, are good and upright people, and this they admitted, adding that they had noticed that they are much more modest than the Germans and far more orderly people (*but very ignorant*). They complained that the emigrant agents in New York, with whom the whole journey to Wisconsin is arranged, often sent these same people to several of their commissioners in Buffalo, where, in order to save money, they crowded them onto ships without regard for their comfort.

I left Buffalo for Wisconsin on board the steamboat "Illinois," Captain Blake commanding. This trip took four days. The ship's commander was very kind to me, and being himself an old salt-water seaman, it pleased him to have me as a passenger, and consequently I obtained free passage both going and returning. On board this steamboat, I also made the acquaintance of an English lawyer, a Mr. T. Penyon, a Cornishman. Being acquainted in Cornwall, I found it very interesting to talk about his birthplace. Moreover, we talked of a great many other things, and I could not help but laugh at him whenever he sought to point out England's preëminence over America and the superiority of the Englishmen to the Americans. As we were on neutral ground, he was able to get from me my opinion that the English boasted too much of their country and that that opinion was the common opinion about them, even in Europe. He agreed to this in part and we were good friends.

The shore to the left, which we followed for some time, was almost level land, not low but at about a forty to fifty foot elevation, with yellowish corn-cockle toward the lake. No hills or bluffs are to be seen. The land is for the most part overgrown with woods and only here and there along the shore are plowed fields to be seen. Inland there are said to be well-settled areas. We stopped first at Cleveland, a town situated beside a river which forms its harbor. How large this town is I cannot say, for our stop was only for a couple of hours and the town lies spread out between hills. An old place it cannot be, for the tree stumps still remain standing close beside the houses. It seemed to be a pleasant town. Many ships lay in the harbor, and wheat

barrels, potash, and willow stakes [*pilestaver*] in large numbers lay on the wharves, which like ours had wooden bulwarks. The buildings were some of them of wood, some of stone, but all very fine and large. From this town a canal goes far inland, clear to the Ohio River, which as you know flows into the Mississippi. From Cleveland the voyage continued to Detroit Sound, where Lake Erie joins with the little Lake St. Clair. At the entrance to this sound, there are many beautiful little islands with fine farms and grassy meadows whereon we saw many cattle.

After having passed these islands and the sound, two miles long, we came to the city of Detroit. This, like Porsgrund,[8] consists of one street along the waterfront which must have been more than half a mile in length. Just as all such straggling towns appear more empty than the compactly built ones, so also in the case of Detroit, notwithstanding the fact that it is supposed to have a considerable commerce, for Michigan, in which it is located, produces a large amount of wheat, oats, corn, potash, and so forth. This town is supposed to be one of the oldest in the western states and was founded by the French when France possessed Canada, but it has not flourished. The reason for this is easily understood, for all the goods which come from the western regions float past here on their way to New York and land first at Buffalo in order to be carried through the Erie Canal down to the sea. Cities which are located on a sound between two lakes, like cities which are situated beside rivers and not at their mouths or at their upper loading or unloading place, usually do not have a great part in the commerce which is carried on on the rivers. Such is the case with Detroit.

Detroit Straits separate the territory of the United States from Canada and, near the town, are about two English miles in width. On the Canadian side there is a little town called Sandwick [Sandwich], which appeared — and is said to be — very inconsequential and poor. My American fellow-travelers exulted a good deal in calling to my attention that there lay Queen Victoria's land. "It is poor looking [they said]; it shows the difference of Gouvernement."[9]

[8] Porsgrund is a seaport on the southeastern coast of Norway.

[9] Gasmann quotes this sentence in English.

The country on both sides of this sound is so low and so absolutely level that I could not discover the smallest hill as far as I could see, but it is heavily wooded. It was reported to be not swampy, however, and to be good corn land except on the Canadian side, which, when there is a great deal of rain, is subject to flood. A railroad is being constructed which is to extend straight across country to Grand Haven on Lake Michigan. This railroad was already more than half built and it was believed that it would be entirely completed by the next year. It was expected that one could travel by this route to Chicago and Milwaukee in two days less time than by steamship. After we had passed through the straits, shallow Lake St. Clair, and St. Clair Straits, we came to the large Lake Huron. On this whole stretch, nothing worthy of remark was noticeable. The only thing which gave the shore along the last-named lake any interest was that on the Canadian side Indians were living, for whom an English mission had established a church and a school. Their small log houses could be seen through the trees, and several groups of Indians, who shouted and waved to the passengers on the steamship, were visible on the hills by the shore. But, as these Indians had discarded their national costume and were somewhat civilized, we did not lose much by not seeing them more closely.

The country on the United States side was more settled and cultivated, and one saw there fine looking farms, fields, and meadows. For the rest, I must confess that the whole stretch of land which I previously had seen, clear from Buffalo to Detroit, was somewhat monotonous in appearance, as seen from the deck of a steamboat. The forests which grace the land were so even that one was tempted to believe that all the trees grew to a definite height, above which they were unable to reach. Wherever I noticed cultivated land, flourishing fields and meadows were visible, and I expect that the whole state of Michigan, when once under cultivation, will constitute a single large area of fields and meadows, and that it will become a granary for millions. But it is a poor landscape for the painter's brush. In the northern part of Michigan there are reported to be swamps and thickly grown forests of oak, hickory, fir, tamarack, maple, and several other varieties of trees. There are supposed to be a prodigious number

of wild pigeons here. On the voyage up Lake Huron we got our first fresh lake trout, the meat of which was not so red as that of our trout but tasted just as good. The fish were very fat — several weighing thirty-six pounds.

We now came to the Strait of Mackinac, which connects Lake Huron and Lake Michigan. Here the country is composed of high hills overgrown with fir and deciduous trees, but it does not appear especially productive. One could see here that one had come farther toward the north. All the species of trees were the same as in Norway, and it was no longer warm, although this place does not lie higher than Rocheford.[10] It also occurred to me that, so far as the native vegetation or the plants were concerned, this region could not be compared with any European country farther south than Jutland, even North Jutland.[11] On an island in the strait there is the little town of Mackinac, which resembles a Norwegian seaport town. Near the town is a fort or fortress with a small garrison. I was especially interested in this place because here for the first time I saw real Indians. Near here they have a trading post and there they set up their wigwams or tents along the shore, about thirty in number, and near by lay their birchbark canoes or boats. I also saw here a great number of Indians who I believe were called Scoux [?] Indians. As to their appearance, there was nothing especially remarkable. They were quite tall and well-grown people and were somewhat darker in complexion than what is called olive, but I could not call it red any more than one calls a mulatto red. Their clothing was composed partly of undressed yellow buckskin, partly of cloth, and over the whole costume they wore a wide English wool blanket as a cloak. On their feet they wore half-boots of yellow leather, which were called moccasins. The costume of the women resembled that of the men with the exception that they wore short skirts. Both men and women were bedecked with considerable finery such as buttons, buckles, and the like. Some of their clothes were decorated with pearls in designs somewhat in the style of our Telemark country-folk [*Telleb*ø*nder*]. Some men, whom I took to be chieftains, wore

[10] That is, Rochefort, France.

[11] Jutland is a province of Denmark.

feathers on their heads and had painted red and white stripes across their faces. The men also carried in their hands small, highly polished axes. Their tents were composed of several poles put down in the ground in a circle about six feet apart, tied together at the tops and covered with tight robes. In the middle of the tent a fire was burning, the smoke finding its way out through the cluster of pole-tops. From the highest point in the middle of the tent hung a hook to hang a kettle on. At the sides were hides to sleep on, some deal boxes, and sticks, and that composed the whole establishment. One finds here remnants of the old French population which have become mixed with the Indians. They still speak a kind of French and have not forgotten how to gesticulate with arms and shoulders.

Mackinac Strait, to get back to my travels, is broad and filled with a number of islands. Lake Huron is very deep, about eighty fathoms, and is dark blue like the ocean. It is quite noticeable that the climate in America, or rather the temperature, is very different from that at the same degree of latitude in Europe. The whole northern part of Michigan lies between forty-six degrees and forty-nine minutes north latitude — the same as the greater part of France, and yet the temperature here cannot be regarded as milder than in Denmark. In Wisconsin, below forty-three degrees north latitude, the temperature is not higher, according to several reports, than in northern France. When one knows what is grown there, I suspect that this is a mistake, for in Wisconsin corn is grown as far north as forty-four degrees and even farther, while on the contrary this variety of grain cannot ripen in northern France, — no, not even at Bordeaux. One may to some extent assume that the elevation of the land above sea level has some influence, for most of Wisconsin lies seven hundred to eight hundred feet higher than the ocean, and that is more than twice as high as most European countries. Toward the north there is a large continent where there is almost perpetual winter and which is not separated from the southern areas by mountains. When, therefore, the north wind blows, one feels chilly even in the summer time. After we had passed the Strait of Mackinac, Lake Michigan was spread before us with its dark blue surface. This is the longest as well as the deepest

of all the lakes. Its depth in the middle is supposed to be almost three hundred fathoms, but it is also supposed to abound in fish. The northern shore of Lake Michigan reveals on that side an ugly and poor landscape. High sandhills rise several hundred feet from the surface of the lake. As far as I could see, there was no sign of vegetation except a few scrubby pines in the valleys and some brown heather. It resembles the western coast of Jutland, but it is still more bare and desolate. Long sandbars extend several miles out from the shore so that no ship can land. I asked an American if anyone lived in this region and he answered, "O no Sir, not a raven or a crow would be able to pick up a living here."[12] Farther south, the land seemed to become greener again and the woods thicker. Here also, it was said, a few settlers had begun to establish themselves. The steamboat now made from the Michigan shore and set its course for Milwaukee. The shore disappeared over the horizon behind us. A considerable swell came against us and also to port, so that the steamboat rolled somewhat, and the outboard gangplank often plunged down into the surface of the water and caused violent tremors in the whole ship. I do not regard these long, three-storied steamships as seaworthy vessels, and the captain on the boat said to me that often in the autumn, when storms occurred, he had difficulty enough in navigating the "Illinois."

After some hours' headway over the lake, Wisconsin rose over the horizon with its green woods and glinting yellow limestone, like the coast of Yorkshire in England. The land was not so level in appearance as the coasts of Michigan on the eastern side. Hills overgrown with oak woods and tall hickory trees were visible occasionally, although there were no high ones as yet. On the whole, the landscape had a colorful appearance, and I cannot deny that a mixture of emotions stirred in my breast such as those I so often feel when, after long voyaging, I approach old Norway's shores. For I soon expected to see my dear brother and his family again. Moreover, so many of our countrymen, some actually needy and some dissatisfied in other ways, seek refuge in this country, where they land with mingled hope and despair. The future must be uncertain for anyone who sets foot

[12] This sentence is written in English in the original.

on such a new and foreign land. Genuine courage is therefore necessary, or perhaps it is often replaced by heedlessness [*Ubetænksomhed*]! However, I do not consider it so difficult for the emigrating Norwegians hereafter as it was for the first ones who came here. Now they may find their countrymen to show them the way.

Milwaukee Bay appeared, and soon we hove to at a long wooden pier which has been built for the sole purpose of docking steamboats, since these cannot sail into the river, which is only seven feet deep. Milwaukee is situated beside a river in a flat valley. One could see at once that it was a new town, the houses being quite spread out. There were, however, a few built up streets with stone buildings of three or four stories and with elegant stores. Here supplies might be had in plenty and there were several hotels for travelers, of which the Milwaukee House and the Temperance House were the finest. The Milwaukee House, in size and elegance, is comparable to similar houses in the larger cities.

As I stepped ashore from the steamboat, I met a Dane by the name of Fribert and a Swede named Pettersen [Petersson].[13] The first I already knew by name, and for his later courtesy, I owe him thanks. When he informed me that he lived near my brother at Pine Lake, we arranged to leave the next morning, it being then too late in the day. I also met two of my brother's daughters, from whom I was exceedingly glad to learn that they all were getting on well in their new fatherland. I lodged that night in a little white-painted inn which bore the sign "Lafayette," the owner of which was a Frenchman. The man had not forgotten his French courtesy and when I exchanged a few French words with him, he became quite spirited. The lodging was very good and quite cheap. For bed and board, a bottle of Bavarian ale, tobacco, and a pipe, I paid in all eighteen cents.

As arranged, Mr. Fribert, Mr. Pettersen and his daughter, and my two nieces and I set out in the morning in a four-wheeled wagon with two horses, which we hired from an Irishman. From Milwaukee to Pine Lake the distance was twenty-six English miles. On this stretch of road the country was composed

[13] On Fribert, see Malmin, ed., *America in the Forties*, 15.

of level areas, none of which were of any great extent, alternating with hills and valleys, so that the landscape was far from monotonous. Woods covered the greater part of the country but there were also many fine cultivated areas with beautiful fields and meadows and fine, white-painted farmhouses. We drove past two large gristmills which were operated by waterfalls made by damming up small streams. The forests were made up of oak, hickory, basswood, maple, elm, ash, and acacia trees, and a great many others. The white-painted farmhouses became more infrequent the farther we went. Log and frame houses, constructed as simply and hastily as possible, were visible here and there in clearings in the woods. Round about these small houses, there were fields of wheat, corn, oats, and potatoes, all in the most flourishing condition. At a few places there were fruit trees and flower beds. Tree stumps raised their black heads in the midst of the wheat fields, and in some cases the whole tree remained. But the tree was leafless, for the roots had been chopped and the tree allowed to stand thus and dry out until a more opportune time should come to remove it. The whole landscape appeared quiet and peaceful in character.

The country about Pine Lake, where I found my brother living in a log house, he and his family well-satisfied, is very beautiful. There are four or five small lakes here, and between these the land rises in hills, prairies, and valleys. A part of this land consists of the so-called oak openings, that is, hills whereon trees stand as though planted at long intervals, some in groves or groups, so that it all appears like a scientifically laid out English park. There are also thick woods of all kinds of trees, of which walnut trees, plum trees, apple trees, and grapevines are common. Wild grapevines twine themselves about the trees, clear to the tops. The grapes are small and sour, but can be cultivated. Raspberries, blackberries, and gooseberries are to be found in plenty. Strawberries are also plentiful and cranberries in great numbers are found in the autumn. Flowers of the greatest variety of colors grow everywhere, on the hills, on the prairies, and in the forests, many of them of the same varieties as we have but many strange varieties too. The small lakes, lying enclosed by hills, are mirror-like in clearness. Many large and

beautiful tree-grown capes and headlands extend out into them. Even though this landscape does not have the elevated character in respect to vistas such as we find in parts of Norway and in the Alpine countries, it is nevertheless exceedingly beautiful, bright, and charming.

My brother's house stands on a height beside a small lake and back of it rises a hill, the highest thereabouts. Many Swedes have settled about Pine Lake and are all very well established. Many Norwegians, of whom I knew several, are also living in this region, all, as far as I could find out, well satisfied with that which they have been able to accomplish. Their houses are still quite small, but are good enough to protect them from the weather. Then too, the climate here is mild and the winter short, so that these houses are much better to live in than many of our Norwegian farmhouses in the mountain districts. A few have already built themselves good and roomy houses and in a few years we may hope that there will be built up here a fine community of Norwegians. My brother has recently purchased quite a large tract of land, about three-fourths of a mile from Pine Lake. He has established a sawmill on the banks of a river which flows through this land. Work has now begun here to break the land and to build houses which he himself expects to live in. The place is called Espen. The timber was very good and the soil, according to my brother's report, very fertile.

It is common knowledge that the foreigners who settle on the new land in North America are subject to ague. That is also the case in Wisconsin, although the condition is not the same everywhere. Those who live in the so-called oak openings, where the country is often hilly and consequently dry, are less exposed to the fever. On the other hand, those who live on the prairies are more often severely attacked by it. The abundance of trees, with the leaves and grass which lie and rot in the forests, especially in damp places, is a source of the ague, for people have found that as soon as the land is properly brought under cultivation, the ague ceases. Pure and healthful water is necessary. It is, however, difficult to find wholesome water in the low areas, and the new settlers are not always so careful as they might be in this matter. Every newcomer should take the precaution, if he settles

on the prairie, to make inquiries as to whether or not there is good water near by and whether the soil has drainage so that it may be dry during the wet season. He should also beware of lying on the ground in the evening and morning, of becoming wet with rain and then drying out again in the sun, and should be careful not to be out in the woods or in the high prairie grass immediately after a rain until after the sun has again dried the earth. He must be temperate in eating and drinking. The large amount of pork which the Americans use is not good for people unaccustomed to such a heavy diet, and it is hardly healthful for the natives. At least, I have heard several Americans maintain that biliousness [*galdefeber*] is often caused by the excessive eating of pork. It is not surprising that the American farmer gives his employees plenty of pork, for it costs him little and is a substantial food. Our farmers from the uplands [south of Dovre] think it is a fine food, but in a warm climate, used in excess, it is very injurious, especially when it is used together with many vegetables. After all, from what I have been able to find out from people who know the country in the West, Wisconsin and Iowa have the most healthful climate. One has nothing to fear from the fever if one does not settle near swamps and marshes, and above all, is careful from the beginning. The steamboat "Illinois" used firewood in place of coal, and that is the case with all the steamships which sail on the Lakes. Consequently we took on fuel at several places en route on the voyage from Buffalo to Milwaukee.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF PIONEERING AS ILLUSTRATED IN GOODHUE COUNTY, MINNESOTA

By Theodore L. Nydahl

One is amazed to contemplate the amount of activity that could be crowded into the life of an adventurous soul who left his home amid the fjords and mountains of Norway to seek economic betterment in the land of opportunity in the day of the pioneer. His was a life of new and varied experience. There were hardships aplenty; and many the tales of self-sacrifice; but when one thinks of the goal that the immigrant set out to reach, one feels that sacrifices and hardships were well worth suffering. The improved status of the majority of the Scandinavian pioneers was their reward for strenuous endeavor.

Some idea of the conditions that the Scandinavian pioneers found throughout the Middle West, the activities in which they engaged, and the manner of life they lived, may perhaps be gained by glancing at conditions in a section small enough for minute study — Goodhue County, Minnesota. The very first settlers came into that county in 1853, but it was in the next two years that the greatest amount of land was taken up. By 1855 practically all the desirable land was taken. Land seekers came from Iowa, from Wisconsin, from Illinois, and directly from Europe. Of the pioneer group the largest element by far was Scandinavian, the Swedes settling in the northern part of the county and the Norwegians in the southern and southwestern sections. They came into a country that contained soil of great fertility and held forth the promise of rich agricultural development.

The lot of the Goodhue County pioneer was not bad when compared with that of the settler in other localities. Thus

P. M. Langemo, who settled in the county in 1856, remarked in a reminiscent address, "The pioneers of this community had their trials, but they were really small compared with those I have heard of and witnessed in other places."[1] Describing conditions on the arrival of the pioneers, he said:

> Naturally there were no houses awaiting them, but they had houses along with them which they had become thoroughly accustomed to in the last few weeks — their covered wagons. And those covered wagons were not like the wagons we see today; no, they were roomy enough so that a person could lie down in one and stretch his weary limbs, and still have room to spare. It was not long, however, before the settlers did have homes, since trees were plentiful. Log houses were built, generally about ten by twelve feet, and sometimes twice as large. These huts were always open to welcome those who came later, and often housed two and three families.[2]

The log house, it appears, was the customary type of abode, but a few families built sod huts or dugouts in a hillside. The log house generally had a roof of sod, although occasionally hay or straw was used. "In favorable weather this sort of shelter was satisfactory, but when rain and storm came it was quite otherwise." The use of sawed lumber from a mill was not to be thought of because, in the first place, the pioneer had no money with which to buy it, and, in the second, hauling distances were too great.[3]

Professor I. F. Grose of St. Olaf College, who spent his boyhood days as one of a pioneer family of Goodhue County, has given a picture of those days.

> Our house [*he writes*] was a conventional white-washed log dwelling with a log shanty attached. Its cellar held potatoes,

[1] *Festskrift, Holden Menigheds Jubelfest 1906*, 49 (Minneapolis, 1908).

[2] *Festskrift, Holden Menigheds Jubelfest*, 48.

[3] *History of Goodhue County, Including a Sketch of the Territory and State of Minnesota* (Red Wing, Minnesota, 1878), 462; G. K. Norsving, "Noget om Indvandringer til Vang i Goodhue County," in *Samband*, no. 35, p. 153 (March, 1911); interviews with Frank K. Carlson and Isaac Emerson. Frank K. Carlson is a resident of Red Wing, Minnesota. He came to Goodhue County in 1854, and was therefore one of the earliest settlers.

cheese, barrels of salt pork, and kegs of butter. The first floor, making up one room only, performed potentially the functions of parlor, living room, dining room, bedroom, and kitchen. . . . The upstairs or attic served as a sleeping room and as a place for stowing away emigrant chests, boxes, wearing apparel, "wadmol" blankets, and other things not needed for immediate use. Window-screens and storm-windows did not exist in those days.[4]

A spirit of good will and helpfulness prevailed among these people who dwelt in cabins, as is evidenced in the occasional "raising bee." A "raising bee" was an example of community coöperation. On a given day, settlers from some distance around would gather at the farm of the pioneer who wanted to put up a cabin. Division of labor was practiced in that each man would have a special task to perform. Some men went into the woods to cut down the trees; some trimmed the fallen timber; some, with the aid of oxen, dragged the logs to the site of construction; and others would roll the logs to their place in the new structure. In a very short time the cabin would be completed, and then followed the feast.[5]

The duties of the pioneer housewives were manifold. Professor Grose tells of them as follows:

I remember that they made cheese, churned butter, baked bread, boiled soap, carded wool, spun yarn, wove cloth, and sewed clothes. Canned fruits and vegetables were not then on the market. Home-prepared food and home-made furniture and garments were largely in vogue. My first ready-made trousers I got when I was twelve years old, and my father had bought them for me at a bankrupt auction sale. Rags dipped in fat and placed in tins lighted the house. On state occasions only, were candles used. The first kerosene lamp at our house was lit with much trepidation, as we had heard direful stories of how its explosions had caused death and ruin. Fortunately we never had any tragical experiences connected with our use of such lamps.[6]

The old settlers report that the first winters seemed very

[4] L. F. Grose, "A Pioneer Boy's Experience in a Corner of Goodhue County," in *Jul i Vesterheimen*, 9:31 (Minneapolis, 1919).

[5] Interview with Frank K. Carlson.

[6] Grose, in *Jul i Vesterheimen*, 9:31.

cold. Perhaps that was because of inadequate shelter and lack of proper clothing. One of them writes:

> Woolen clothing we knew nothing of in those days. We had no fur coats nor overshoes. The latter need was in a way met by making use of hide from an ox or cow. If an ox died it was a common thing to have the neighbors come and ask for a section of the hide that they might make a kind of leather foot covering. Such shoes served fairly well. In time, fur coats began to be made from sections of calfskin. These coats were rather short to begin with, but as the supply of calfskin increased they attained a more reasonable length.[7]

The word economy may not have been in the vocabulary of the early Norwegians in Goodhue County, but the virtue was a characteristic of their everyday living. One of them says:

> The majority of us, for a good many years, lived very frugally. It was necessary that we save wherever it was possible. We did not consider our means great enough to permit us to use unmixed coffee; we had to add to it grindings of dried bread crust, and the like. By selling some butter and eggs it was possible to lay our hands upon sugar and coffee. It was impossible to get cash.[8]

No one dreamed, in those days, of heavy trading in wheat or hogs, as there was no market for either. In some instances roasted wheat or barley was used for coffee. For construction purposes wooden pins took the place of nails.[9]

In order to secure title to his claim, the settler had to wait for the day when his land came on the market, upon which a visit to the land office was necessary. In conversations with people of Goodhue County today one commonly hears reference made to the "homesteading" done by the pioneers. This use of the term is, however, an error, for practically all the land of Goodhue County was taken five years before the Homestead Act went into effect. The land office which the

[7] Norsving, in *Samband*, no. 35, p. 154.

[8] Norsving, in *Samband*, no. 35, p. 156–157.

[9] Information received from Marten C. Westermoe. Mr. Westermoe is a resident of Kenyon, Minnesota, who came to Goodhue County as a boy in the late fifties, and has lived the remainder of his life in the county.

people of Goodhue County made use of was located at Red Wing, and was opened early in the year 1855 with W. W. Phelps as register and C. C. Graham as receiver.[10] The settler invariably had to borrow the two hundred dollars needed to cover the charges against a one hundred and sixty acre farm, and he paid interest on that loan up to as high as forty per cent. The customary rate, however, was twenty-five per cent.[11] Money was extremely hard to get, and the farmers made as many deals among themselves as possible without the use of it.

Breaking the land was a slow and laborious process. Those who had settled on the prairie naturally found the process easier than did those who had taken timber claims. It appears that many of the Norwegians regarded the timber land as superior to the prairie and therefore selected wooded tracts in the western part of the county, which had a number of scattered groves. These settlers had the additional labor of pulling out the stumps, most of which were of oak, two or three feet through. It would take a farmer several years working with chain and oxen to clear his land of stumps.[12] "Breaking rigs" in the early days went from claim to claim much as threshing outfits in our day pass from farm to farm. The equipment consisted generally of five yoke of oxen, drawing a bulky plow. One man would manage the oxen, walking beside them with a whip twenty feet long, shouting his "get up," "haw," or "gee" as the occasion demanded. The plow, thus used, would "work a furrow eighteen or twenty inches wide through forest and brush." Breaking time generally extended from May 15 to July 15. The price charged

[10] Lucius F. Hubbard, "Early Days in Goodhue County," in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 12: 154 (St. Paul, 1908).

[11] M. S. Crevig, "I gamle Dage," in *Nordstjernen* (Red Wing, Minnesota), June 3, 1898.

[12] Interview with Mr. Isaac Emerson, who with his parents arrived in Goodhue County in the early sixties. He has served several terms in the state legislature and is one of the outstanding citizens of the county.

for breaking was five dollars an acre, "and a rig often plowed one hundred acres a season, and so made good money." [13]

The grainfields in the early pioneering years were small and widely scattered. Generally they were fenced in with zigzag wooden rail fences. Fencing was necessary because cattle were permitted to roam at large. They were turned loose in the morning, and customarily came back of their own accord in the evening. "But sometimes we children had to go out to get them," writes Grose. "Many a time did I listen for the tinkling of the cowbell in order to locate the whereabouts of the cows and drive them home." [14]

Wheat was practically the only crop raised for the market. Other grains were produced only in small quantities, corn hardly at all. Vegetables were grown, of course, potatoes particularly, but only in quantities sufficient for home consumption. The price for wheat sold at Red Wing in the first years of grain growing ranged from thirty-five to fifty cents. Not until Civil War days did the price go as high as sixty-two and one-half cents. Before the war poverty was general; after the war better times set in.[15]

Judged by the standards of our day, the methods employed in these early years of farming were crude. Sowing was done by hand. The grain was cradled. Threshing was accomplished as in Biblical times, by oxen treading the grain in circular fashion. Flails also were used for threshing. This state of affairs did not, however, continue for many years, for machines began to be introduced in 1859 and 1860. In the days

[13] Urevig, in *Nordstjernen*, June 3, 1898.

[14] Grose, in *Jul i Vesterheimen*, 9:34; interview with A. M. Slee. Mr. Slee saw the settlement of the district around Dennison, Minnesota. He came with his family as a boy in the early days of settlement, and in 1929 was still living at Dennison.

[15] Some of the above information was received from A. M. Slee and Marten C. Westermoe. See also Carl Roos, "Vasa, Goodhue County, Minnesota: the First Settlers," in Swedish Historical Society of America, *Yearbooks*, 10:107 (St. Paul, 1925).

before the Civil War, prices received for farm products were low, and so also were farm wages. Harvest help was inexpensive, with sixty-five cents a day commonly paid for harvest hands. During the war wages rose, and $2.50 and $3.00 a day came to be the common wage.[16]

Red Wing was the market for the majority of the Norwegian settlers in Goodhue County, as it was also for most of the settlers of southern Minnesota until railroads opened the way to new markets. In fact, for several years Red Wing enjoyed the distinction of being "the largest primary grain market in the world."[17] Langemo, writing of the trip from Holden to Red Wing, says:

> To reach Red Wing the first settlers had to pick their own way, not alone over prairies, but also through forests and streams, over bluffs and sand hills. The road may be long now, but the course taken in those days was a good bit longer. . . . The three days that it generally took to make the trip to Red Wing and back passed quickly, especially in the summer. We generally traveled in small caravans, and the well trained oxen followed the road themselves so that the drivers could keep in a group and talk together as they followed. The ox teams did not trouble to go very fast, and neither did the drivers. . . . Rich meadows for the oxen were on every hand, and while they grazed, the lunch kit and coffee kettle performed their duties by us. Beds could be had without cost either on the first or the second story; namely, under or on top of the wagon.[18]

Another writer speaks reminiscently of two spots along the Hader-Red Wing road that the grain haulers always tried to reach, because they were especially desirable for grazing purposes, and also because the company of the other drivers was a thing to be desired. Often of a night there would be as many as twenty men and teams assembled, and a big bonfire and the interchange of stories around it deprived the grain

[16] Roos, in Swedish Historical Society of America, *Yearbooks*, 10: 107; J. J. Skørdalsvold, "Omkring 1860," in *Trønderlagets Aarbok, 1926*, 55; interviews with A. M. Slee and Marten C. Westermoe.

[17] Hubbard, in *Minnesota Historical Collections*, 12: 161.

[18] *Festskrift, Holden Menigheds Jubelfest*, 49–50.

haulers of many good hours of sleep, but introduced a wholesome variety into the day's work. During hot seasons much of the hauling was done by night, as the midday sun oppressed the oxen. Grain hauling continued, however, until late in the winter, and the trip to Red Wing through deep snow and in extreme cold was a trying ordeal.[19]

A large number of Norwegians of Warsaw Township used Hastings more commonly than Red Wing as their grain market. The grain road which they used took an almost directly northerly route one mile east of the county's western border, and crossed the Cannon River at a point a little below the present town of Randolph. Three days were also required for this route, the haulers generally striving to reach the Archer House, a hotel ten miles from Hastings, the first night. On the second day they sold their grain in Hastings, purchased supplies, and then started on the return trip, generally stopping at the same hotel to pass the second night.[20]

In accounts of old times in Goodhue County, one frequently comes across the term "the Red Wing grain road." There were really several grain routes, but four of them were used much more commonly than any others. There were, of course, many roads which branched into these along the way. It is interesting to note that county and state highways tend to follow the same grain roads. They took the shortest possible route across the county and therefore ran in a diagonal line, cutting section lines without mercy. They generally followed high land to avoid the marshes and heavier timber.

Older settlers speak of two stagecoach lines which ran through the county. One of them, a part of the St. Paul-Dubuque line, ran north and south between Cannon Falls and Zumbrota. The other extended from Red Wing to Faribault, Kenyon then being the last stopping place within the county. This line traveled over the same ground that the grain haulers

[19] Urevig, in *Nordstjernen*, June 17, 1898.

[20] Interview with A. M. Slee.

did. The stagecoach made the trip in one day, and the return trip the next day. The coaches used were of the hackney type with the driver's seat on top, and two spans of horses as the traction power. Besides transporting passengers they carried mail. In 1882 the Minnesota Central, or Cannon Valley Railroad, was opened for business, and stagecoach service was subsequently terminated.[21]

Horses were a rare sight in Goodhue County until after the Civil War. The first few years after 1865 were prosperous for the county, and people then began to purchase horses to replace the slowly plodding oxen. "But with the passing of the oxen," according to Langemo, " disappeared also a certain sociability which has not been revived to this day." [22]

Indians remained on their old grounds for several years after the negotiation in 1851 of the treaties of Traverse des Sioux and Mendota, and the settlers came in contact with them very frequently.[23] Very rarely did they do any harm. Now and then one of them might frighten a household by putting his face against a windowpane and peering inside, but as a rule this was merely the preliminary to a request for food or the purchase of ammunition.[24]

The Sioux War of 1862, however, had reverberations in Goodhue County. Soon after the outbreak, rumors were circulated that the Sioux were in the neighborhood carrying on depredations. One report had it that all the inhabitants of Faribault were killed. "A certain woman living in the southeastern part of Warsaw Township was out one night calling

[21] Minnesota Railroad Commissioner, *Annual Reports*, 1882, p. 84; interviews with A. M. Slee and Susie Clark Ellsworth. Mrs. Ellsworth was one of the first teachers of Goodhue County, and in 1929 was living on her farm three miles from Cannon Falls.

[22] *Festskrift, Holden Menigheds Jubelfest*, 50.

[23] By the treaties made with the Sioux Indians in 1851, at Traverse des Sioux and Mendota, the Indians ceded to the United States their lands west of the Mississippi in Minnesota and Iowa.

[24] Norsving, in *Samband*, no. 35, p. 154; interview with Isaac Emerson.

the cattle in, and some other people who had heard her calls mistook them for cries for help, and so with the quickness of lightning the report was spread throughout the neighborhood that the Indians were at work slaying the inhabitants of school district number 36 in Warsaw."[25] The fear of the Indian must have been deep seated, for we find the settlers gathering together for protection. Cleng J. Dale speaks of a large group that assembled at the home of Torger Rygh, "a devout old gentleman, at whose place people frequently held religious meetings. . . . The women and children," he said, "occupied the second floor while we men remained on the ground floor and equipped ourselves with whatever weapons we could find, such as axes and pitchforks, as we had no guns." A watch was kept during the night, but no Indians appeared, and the frightened settlers found upon investigation that their homes too were unmolested. The nearest Indian that night was probably a hundred miles or more away.[26]

Because of the compactness of Norwegian settlement in Goodhue County there was little to induce the pioneers to learn the language of the country. Very few of the original settlers spoke any English. Even their children, who attended "Norwegian school," as the summer religious schools were called, as faithfully as they did the "English school," or public school, spoke the language of their fathers better than they did that of the land of their adoption. Not until the third generation do we find English used in preference to the Norwegian. And even today one will meet a large number in the county who speak Norwegian very fluently.

The Norwegians had little to do with the establishment of towns in the locality where they lived. Credit for activity of that nature goes generally to the Yankees. It was they also who generally made up the professional element in the county

[25] Urevig, in *Nordstjernen*, April 22, 1898.

[26] Martin Ulvestad, *Nordmændene i Amerika, deres Historie og Rekord*, 93 (Minneapolis, 1907).

and who were elected to public office. The townships of Holden and Wanamingo were exceptions in the last regard, however. There, most of the town officers from the day of organization were men of the predominant nationality. The pioneer towns, those formed in the years 1856, 1857, and 1858, are Kenyon, Zumbrota, Wanamingo, Hader, Wastedo, Norway, and Goodhue. A glance at the names of some of the firms which established the first stores in these towns will show immediately that the men who made up those firms were not Norwegian. There were Kenyon and Company in Kenyon, J. F. Wright in Wanamingo, and Swift and Sales in Hader. Zumbrota was founded by the Strafford Western Emigration Company, composed of settlers from the New England states, particularly Connecticut. Aspelund, founded some years later, is an interesting contrast to the above cases. One can hardly call it a town. The place contains a church and a store, which was established in 1875 by a coöperative organization of Norwegian farmers in the locality. They hired as their manager Nels J. Ottun, who was also a Norwegian.[27]

As the towns grew older, Norwegians began to enter them and to set up business establishments in competition with those formerly founded by the Yankees. In some cases they bought the older establishments. Thus the Norwegian settlers penetrated the life of the community and county, gradually losing their status as a compact group of alien tillers of the soil and assuming diversified rôles in the economic and social structure they helped to build.

[27] W. H. Mitchell, *Geographical and Statistical Sketch of the Past and Present of Goodhue County, Together with a General View of the State of Minnesota*, 70–185 (Minneapolis, 1869); Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, ed., *History of Goodhue County, Minnesota*, 169–234 (Chicago, 1909).

NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN FICTION SINCE 1880

By Aagot D. Hoidahl

It has been said that the literature of a people is a reflection of their life. This is particularly applicable to Norwegian-American literature. In the earlier period of Norwegian immigration, it consisted of a series of guide books full of detailed information and advice; and of hundreds of lyrics showing a slavish imitation of Norwegian poets. Shortly after the Civil War appeared a number of novels and short stories also exhibiting a marked dependence on European models. It was not until near the close of the second decade of the twentieth century that Norwegian-American authors were comparatively free from the old-world influence. The cheap sentimentalism of some of the earlier novels gradually gave way to the more sturdy and fundamental treatment found in Dorothea Dahl, Ager, Simon Johnson, and Rølvaag. The first novels pictured life and manners in Norway; but as time passed, the scene shifted to America, and we have, as one writer puts it, a "transmutation of pioneer life." The facts which the novelists used were found in the columns of the "newspapers, in individual memorabilia, in letters to the home country that are gradually coming to light, and in inexhaustible contributions of pioneers to the press of both this country and Norway."[1] Not to be overlooked or underestimated is the influence of the temperance movement on Norwegian-American writers. At a time when interest in Norwegian-American literary productions was at a low ebb, this movement served as a medium through which writers could get their works into print. One is not surprised, then, to find a marked didacticism

[1] Julius E. Olson, "Literature and the Press," in Harry Sundby-Hansen, ed., *Norwegian Immigrant Contributions to America's Making*, 125 (New York, 1921).

present in many of the short stories and some of the novels until recent times. Very few of the Norwegian-American literary productions thus far are masterpieces. The novels and the short stories are honest, candid, sometimes painfully realistic accounts of life — a series of plain stories of everyday happenings among the Scandinavian settlers in America — of their sufferings and struggles; of their joys and further hopes. The strength of the stories is in their homeliness, their realism, and their unadorned pictures of actual conditions and experiences. In estimating the cultural production of the Scandinavians, Alfred O. Fonkalsrud says that, while the books "suffer disadvantage from representing a transition period between European and American artistic circles, they nevertheless valuably bring out the characterizing points of this transition period — reflecting European movement of thought and feeling, while at the same time picturing American environment." [2]

The first writer to gain wide recognition was Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, born in Frederiksværn, Norway, in 1848. In 1854, when his father, an army officer, was sent inland to a military post, the family went to the home of the mother's father at Systrand by the Sognefjord. Here the boy lived a happy adventurous boyhood, and here he learned old folk tales and dreamed about the *neck*, the *hulder*, and other spirits of the North. After receiving his secondary education at Systrand and Christiania, he studied at the universities of Leipzig and Christiania. During his vacations he made many walking tours, and in that way became familiar with much of the country between Christiania and Systrand. His father, by this time a professor of mathematics at the Naval Academy, had been in the United States, and being much impressed by the opportunities the new world offered to young men, advised his son to spend a year there before beginning his study of

[2] Alfred O. Fonkalsrud, *The Scandinavian-American*, 109 (Minneapolis, 1915).

philology. So it was that in April, 1869, Boyesen came to New York, traveled through New England and the West, and finally stopped in Chicago, where in 1870 he became assistant editor of *Fremad*. From childhood, Boyesen had wanted to write, but his father had given him but little encouragement, because he said, in order to be successful in literature, a person must be able to write another language as easily as his own. As Boyesen had chosen English as his other medium of expression, one can easily see of what value a year in America would be to him.

During the winter of 1870, while teaching at Urbana College, Ohio, Boyesen wrote *Gunnar*, rather for pleasure and self-expression than with expectation of literary success. In the summer of 1871, through Professor Ezra Abbot of Yale, Boyesen met Professor Child, who became interested in the young man and invited him to dinner. Here Boyesen read a part of the manuscript of *Gunnar*. William Dean Howells, who was present, became so interested in the story that he invited the young author to his home that he might hear the conclusion. The result was that *Gunnar* appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* during the year 1873, an unusual honor for a first book and especially for a book written in English by a man who had been in this country less than two years. Boyesen himself was somewhat surprised by the kind reception of his novel.

In 1874 Boyesen traveled through France, England, Norway, and Germany for a year. In Paris he met and became a friend of Turgenev, to whom *Gunnar* was dedicated on its publication as a book in 1874. On his return to America, he taught some years at Cornell; and while there, he wrote *A Norseman's Pilgrimage*, 1875; *Tales of Two Hemispheres*, 1876; *Falconberg*, 1879; and *Goethe and Schiller*, 1879. In 1880 Boyesen went to New York, and in 1881 was appointed to a professorship at Columbia University, a position he held until his death in 1895. Between 1880 and 1895, Boyesen

wrote ten novels and volumes of short stories, two books for boys, three volumes of criticism, a history, a book of essays, and one of poetry, — certainly a great amount of writing in a period filled with the duties of a teacher and a lecturer. In the field of belles lettres, his earliest work is the best. His *Gunnar*, *Idylls of Norway*, *A Norseman's Pilgrimage*, and *Ilka on the Hill Top*, he never surpassed.

Gunnar, 1873, an idyll, presents the dreams of beauty and the romance of a little goatherd in a remote *sæter* (chalet) in Norway. This love for beauty is intensified through stories told by the grandmother. Later the lad is sent to an art school. The love story is told simply and well, and the pictures of peasant life are excellently drawn. It is in this book that Boyesen makes use of the stories of the *huldre*, the *nøck*, and the trolls, which he had heard in the home of his early boyhood. *Gunnar* revealed him as a romanticist of great promise. Under the influence of Howells and Turgenev, however, he decided to paint life at its meanest, its most commonplace. This, he said, was the function of art, — to help the reader to a knowledge of self, even if it "lessened his happiness." The fact that *Gunnar* is still read while *A Golden Calf* and *The Mammon of Unrighteousness* are forgotten, shows wherein Boyesen's real power lay.

There is no question of Boyesen's ability as a teller of stories. His books are alive; they possess humor and deep emotion, and they reveal a sound, fresh outlook on life. His works, however, lack unity, proportion, and in some cases, probability. Boyesen's American stories do not ring quite true, possibly because he never quite succeeded in capturing the American point of view. Where he deals with customs, habits, and life in Norway, he is successful. His stories for boys on Norwegian themes are among the best of their kind — spirited, wholesome, strong in plot and workmanship. His one drama, *Alpine Roses*, 1883, based on the story, *Ilka on the Hill Top*, was produced in New York and achieved a

success. Some of his best works outside the field of belles lettres are his *Goethe and Schiller, Ibsen,* and *Essays on Scandinavian Literature.*[3]

A number of the earlier novels written in Norwegian by Norwegian-Americans delineated life in the fatherland. Among these were *Hun Ragnhild,* 1876; *Familien paa Skovset* (The Family from Skovset), 1889; and *Trang Vei* (Narrow Way), 1899, by Bernt Askevold. None of these is outstanding. Another of the early novels was Ole K. Gløerson's *Sigurd,* 1879, a story portraying the religious unrest that found expression in the followers of Hauge and Grundtvig. One feels that in this book the spiritual unrest of the people is overdrawn and that too much of the book is devoted to the description of various religious hangers-on. The book is neither well proportioned nor well told.

Of women writers of prose only a few are worthy of mention. Drude Krog Janson published three novels, *En ung Pige* (A Young Girl), 1887; *Ensomhed* (Loneliness), 1888; and *En Saloonkeepers Datter* (A Saloonkeeper's Daughter), 1894. Ingerid Berrum published *Familien paa Stjerneklip* (The Family from Stjerneklip) during the later eighties. The novel was not particularly successful because her conception of life in a Norwegian mountain neighborhood was so far from reality. Ulrikka Bruun published *Menneskets største Fiende* (Mankind's Greatest Enemy), 1877; *Lykkens Nøgle* (The Keys of Happiness), 1880; and *Fiendens Faldgruber* (The Pitfalls of the Enemy), 1894, in the interests of temperance. The first Norwegian-American woman to write both in English and in Norwegian was Dorothea Dahl. Her volumes of short stories, *Hverdagslivet* (Everyday Life), 1915, and *Returning Home,* 1920, are simple, sincere, well

[3] Michael A. Mikkelson, "Hjalmar H. Boyesen," in *Symra,* 2:60–76 (1906); Waldemar Ager, "Norsk-amerikansk Skjønliteratur," in *Kvartalskrift,* 10:53 (April, 1914); Charles Dudley Warner, ed., *Library of the World's Best Literature,* 5:2272–2274 (New York, 1897).

told tales of little everyday happenings. Her strength as a writer lies in her ability to delineate the characters of ordinary people. The best short stories are "The Talking Machine" and "The Old Bookcase." Her novel *Byen paa Bjerget* (The Town on the Bluff), 1925, gives the story of Drummond in Dakota Territory, from its beginning until the organization of the church. It also traces the fortunes of the Otto Lervang family from the nineties until after the World War. The book is an intimate picture of the life of the times told in a leisurely manner.

Belle Hagen Winslow is one of the two present-day Norwegian-American women novelists who were born in Norway but who have done all their writing in English. In 1920 appeared *White Dawn*, a story of Norway in the year 1000 and of the people's conflicting beliefs in the White Christ and in the *jøtuls* and frost giants. This spiritual conflict stands out clearly in the betrothal and marriage of Øyvind the skald, a boy of humble birth, and Gunlaug the heiress. After great suffering, Øyvind wins his fight against the spirits of darkness and finally gains peace and happiness with his family. The unconvincing treatment of the supernatural in the story makes the tale seem incoherent and improbable, though the love element is well handled.[4] In her second book, *Where Man Is King*, 1921, Mrs. Winslow relates the love story of Einar Ilstad, head of the Ilstad Transportation Company of Bergen, Norway, and Anita the dancer, whom he met in a city in the southwestern part of the United States. Marrying her, he took her from her gay, though carefully chaperoned, life of the theater to the stiff, conventional society life of Bergen. Back in his old home, Einar seemed to become another person altogether. At last, unhappy and half-ill, Anita left for America. Einar followed and eventually all differences were

[4] The novel is reviewed in *American-Scandinavian Review*, 9:61 (January, 1921).

cleared up. The book is a conventional love story fairly well told.

Very early in this period, we find Norwegian-Americans interested in distinctly American topics. The first good example of this interest is Kristofer Janson's *Vildrose* (Wild Rose), 1887. This is the story of Aslak Rud, who, after the death of his wife, took his baby daughter, Gunhild, and settled somewhere in the depths of a forest in Minnesota. Here Gunhild eventually made friends with the Indians, especially the lad "Flink Hjort." Curious about the life beyond the forest, Wild Rose stole away from her father and finally reached St. Paul. The rest of the story tells of her various adventures until she returned to her old home. The story is melodramatic and, in some places, improbable. The character of Wild Rose is not so realistically painted as that of the Indian youth. The story of the Indians, especially the Norway Lake episode in the Sioux War of 1862, is very well done. *Præriens Saga* (Saga of the Prairies), 1885, is a group of stories treating of early pioneer life, hardship, religious controversies, and claim jumping.[5]

Undoubtedly the most colorful Norwegian-American figure in this period is Peer Strømme (1856–1921), humorist, novelist, editor, teacher, globe-trotter, and political speaker. Although a prolific writer, he has left but a few volumes. Of these, at least one bids fair to become a Norwegian-American classic. *Hvorledes Halvor blev Prest* (How Halvor Became a Preacher), 1893, gives an excellent picture of an early Norwegian settlement and of the early school life at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. The story is entertaining and full of the kindly humor characteristic of Strømme, the man. The pictures of college life and manners, especially the

[5] Other books by this author are *Amerikanske Fantasier* (An American Fantasy), Chicago, 1876; *Vore Bedsteforældre* (Our Grandparents), 1882; *Et Arbeidsdyr* (The Beast of Burden), Minneapolis, 1889; *Bag Gardinet* (Behind the Curtain), Minneapolis, 1889.

opening of the school year, the day before Christmas vacation, and the boys' dreams of the future, are well drawn. He continues the story of Halvor in *Unge Helgeson* (Young Helgeson), 1911, a book which compares very favorably with his first novel. Strømme's optimism and enjoyment of life are but two of many qualities that endear him to his readers. His writings also include his *Erindringer* (Reminiscences); a slender volume of poems, *Digte*; a number of critical essays; a group of interesting travel letters; and a number of translations.[6]

Another book that promises to stand with the best work of the period is *Husmands-Gutten: en Fortælling fra Sigdal* (The Cotter's Boy: A Tale from Sigdal), 1889, by Hans Foss. It ran serially in *Decorah-Posten* and was so popular that it was responsible for six thousand new subscribers in one winter.[7] It is the story of Torstein Hovland, Gunhild his wife, and Marie their daughter; and of the *bonde* Torkil, his wife Randi, and their son Ole. Most of the book deals with the love story of Marie and Ole, who, in spite of the difference in their social status, eventually marry and leave for America to build a home. *Husmands-Gutten* is by far the best of Foss's early works.[8] His latest book, *Valborg*, 1927, is a detailed account of the trip made by the Holmen and the Solvang families in two prairie schooners through Wisconsin and

[6] Johannes B. Wist, "Peer Strømme," in *Symra*, 1:144–158 (1905); Einar Josephsen, "An Outline of Norwegian-American Literature," in *Scandinavia*, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 50–55 (April, 1924); Ager, in *Kvartalskrift*, 10:48 (April, 1914). The volume of *Erindringer* (Minneapolis, 1923) was compiled by a committee after Strømme's death. Some of Strømme's best lyrics appear in Ludvig Lima's collection of *Norsk Amerikanske Digte* (Minneapolis, 1903).

[7] Olaf M. Norlie, *History of the Norwegian People in America*, 300 (Minneapolis, 1925).

[8] Foss also wrote *Kristine, en Fortælling fra Valders* (Christina, a Tale from Valders), 1886; *Den amerikanske Saloon*, 1887, which was translated by J. J. Skørdalsvold under the title *Tobias, A Story of the Northwest* (Minneapolis, 1899); and *Hvide Slaver* (White Slaves), 1892.

the Red River Valley. We are given glimpses of choral societies, seventeenth of May festivals and other social activities; of newspapers and works of Norwegian authors; as well as the toil of clearing the land and the building of homes. One feels that the book is an authentic representation of life in a midwestern settlement.

In this period, O. A. Buslett, the pioneer poet, "turned from the lyric, the heaven-storming poetic drama, and allegorical tale to bald prose narrative, to deal with the life of the early immigrant in the fields and lumber camps of Northern Wisconsin, where he is on thoroughly familiar ground. Here he has done his best work."[9] *Sagastolen* (The Seat of the Saga), 1908, is his first attempt at presenting the life of the lumbering town. One autumn noon after many weary days of tramping, Ole Busterud reaches the home of his old friend, Torstein Aasen, somewhere in the lumbering district of central Wisconsin. During Ole's visit, the two friends pass much of their time in tramping and reminiscence. Their discussions range from the status of the Norwegian-American press to dime novels and Poe; from the blighted romance of Aasen's youth to speculations on the future. The last part of the book is devoted to Ole Busterud's account of life in the Middle West after an interval of about thirty years. It presents a picture of a group of people dabbling in socialism, communism, and free love. The first half of the book is much better in construction and plot than the second half.[10] *Veien til Golden Gate* (The Way to the Golden Gate), 1916 [?], is a romantic tale of a new midwestern community, the love story of Rosalita, daughter of Aasmund Skaaning, and Haakon Hellaway, son of "Mother" Hellevei. His last novel, *Fra min Ungdoms Nabolag* (From My Boyhood Home), 1908, is a story of Wisconsin in 1868, especially of the lumbering in the vicinity of Iola, Waupaca, Scandinavia, and Stevens Point.

[9] Olson, in Sundby-Hansen, ed., *Norwegian Immigrant Contributions*, 135.
[10] *Sagastolen* is reviewed in *Kvartalskrift*, 5:29–30 (April, 1909).

Among the writings of Nils N. Rønning, the Norwegian-American editor, are *Bare for Moro* (Just for Fun), 1913; *Da Stjernene sang* (When the Stars Sang), 1925, a group of short stories; and a novel, *Gutten fra Norge* (The Boy from Norway), 1924, issued in English as *Lars Lee*, 1928. The book opens with a portrayal of the religious life of a certain section of Norway in the 1860's, bringing out especially the effect the so-called "Readers" had on adolescent minds. Among the young people who rebel against the religious restrictions and life in general is Lars Lee, who hopes to find religious peace, and opportunity to better himself materially in America. During his early years there, Lars Lee and the other settlers live through one hardship after another, unusually severe blizzards, grasshopper plagues, prairie fires, and even a number of Indian encounters. Gradually life for them all becomes brighter, happier, and safer.

Of interest, too, in the same field is a volume published in 1914 by M. Falk Gjertsen, *Harald Hegg — Billeder fra Prærien med Skildringer af Norsk-Amerikansk Folkeliv* (Pictures from the Prairie with Sketches of Norwegian-American Life). It pictures vividly the social, religious, and political life of the Northwest.

A first English novel of promise is *The Second Generation*, 1923, by Anthony Rud. It is a study of Einar Merrson, who, after an illicit love affair, leaves Norway and settles in America. It shows the gradual degeneration wrought by his love of money and of land. The story receives its name from Leif Merrson, the illegitimate son of Einar, who, as one of the second generation, fights for and obtains an education, eventually gaining social and professional standing. At times, the book is too grim and sordid to be enjoyable, but it is nevertheless interesting. Another single volume of promise is the group of nature stories, *Under Vestens Himmel* (Under Western Skies), 1918, by Olai Aslagson, translated by Peer Strømme and published in 1923. The stories of the

coyote, of the prairie tragedy, of Bess the mare, and of Sport and Midget are not easily forgotten, so extremely vivid are they. They are "the creations of a man who knows and loves nature, intimately." [11]

James A. Peterson has published two novels of Norwegian-American life: *Hjalmar, or the Immigrant's Son*, 1922; and *Solstad: The Old and the New*, 1923. The first is a combination of two stories, that of Peter Aspelund, and that of Hjalmar Sunmere. We are given pictures of the daily life and the interests of the immigrants and of the part played by the Norwegians in the Civil War. The second book, *Solstad*, is the story of a baby, later named Arne, who was washed ashore from a schooner wrecked somewhere on the northern coast of Norway. After the death of his foster mother, Arne was bound out to Knute Solstad, a rich farmer in the neighborhood. Knute had a daughter, Gunhild, a trifle younger than Arne. The years passed. Arne learned to love Gunhild. After his term of service was at end, Arne left Norway for America, where he hoped to gain enough wealth to buy land and build a home for Gunhild. He was successful and a few years later returned to Norway for his promised bride. Fate played the proper cards, for he returned to America not only with Gunhild but also with "Nora of the Mill," who proved to be his mother. A few years later Solstad and his wife came to America to visit Gunhild and her family. It was not long before Knute, too, became imbued with the American spirit and asked to be taken to the county seat so he could take out his "first papers" and vote for "Mr. Linkin." In this book are pictured the usual trials and difficulties of the early Norwegian-American settlers. One feels that these are authentic and yet one is not particularly excited by them. This is probably due to the looseness in the construction of the plot, especially in the weaving of the stories of Nora and Arne.

[11] *Scandinavia*, vol. 1, no. 1, p. 96 (January, 1924).

Simon Johnson, at present on the staff of the paper *Decorah-Posten*, has also made a name for himself as a novelist. "He knows the prairies of the Dakotas and the life there," and in his last work has given a panoramic picture of the trials of pioneer days when the Indians were a menace.[12] In 1881, at the age of seven, Simon Johnson went to Hillsboro, North Dakota, then a small settlement. As he was forced to work on the farm, he received practically no schooling. To compensate for this, he read Norwegian literature and began to set his thoughts down on paper. The observations of nature gathered during those years at the plow furnished Johnson with many prairie pictures for his later writings. It was in 1905 while on a homestead that he wrote *Et Geni* (A Genius), published in 1907. It is the story of Sigurd Vaagen, an exemplary, studious young man who, shortly after his arrival from Norway, lived alone on the prairie while finishing an invention. On its completion, the firm which had agreed to buy it rejected it; and, crazed with disappointment, Sigurd began to drink. It was not long before drink overmastered him and brought about his ruin. It seems to the writer that in this story Johnson overemphasizes the importance of heredity.[13] One can easily guess that the book was written in the interest of prohibition. While the book lacks unity, it does show Johnson's ability to delineate character. *Lonca*, 1909, is the story of the little cripple "Jul" Fagervold, who worked early and late taking care of the younger children in the family. The book is really a collection of beautiful, well written stories rather than a novel.[14]

Johnson's next novel *I et nyt Rige* (In a New Kingdom), 1914, is available in English, having been translated by C. O.

[12] Olson, in Sundby-Hansen, ed., *Norwegian Immigrant Contributions*, 135.

[13] For a review of this novel, see "Nytid," in *Norsk Tidskrift*, 1: 110–112 (December, 1907).

[14] See the review by N. N. Rønning in *Ungdommens Ven*, 25: 710–711 (December, 1914) and another in *Kvartalskrift*, 5: 26–28 (October, 1909).

Solberg in 1916 and published under the title *From Fjord to Prairie*. It sketches pioneer life in the Northwest in its beginning. In a new settlement are Bernt Aasen, a young man of courage and foresight; the staunch, religious Grandfather Engh, his son Thor and his family; the clumsy, weak-witted "Per Trot" (P. J. Pederson); the unfortunate, patient Brovang family; and the ambitious Franz Flagstad and his group. We read of their toilsome, dangerous trips after supplies and of their attempts to retain a little of their old culture by social and religious meetings. We read of the heavy snows, the hostile Indians, the destruction of crops, the coming of more settlers, the organization of the church, and the building of the railroad. Johnson's next book was *Fire Fortællinger* (Four Stories), 1917. The first three are character sketches, and the fourth describes the Non-Partisan League movement. In these stories, Johnson expresses himself simply, sincerely, and with conviction.[15]

Fallitten paa Braastad (The Braastad Bankruptcy), 1922, is a voluminous novel by Johnson dealing with the struggles and ambitions of the Norwegian people on the North Dakota prairie. Tragedy in various guises stalks through the lives of the pioneer Jens Braastad, his wife Lisa, and their two children. Jens, a sturdy, industrious worker, does not realize the price that the drudgery and the loneliness of prairie life demand of his sensitive and rather weak wife. Neither of the parents understands the children; and part of the tragedy comes in that they are unable to bridge the gap between themselves and their American children. Henry is aloof, moody, restless, and dissatisfied. Louise, on the other hand, is more amiable and of a more equable temperament. The story closes with Louise's promise to marry Olaf Nelson, one of the most promising young men of the community. Johnson's next book, *Frihetens Hjem* (Home of Freedom), 1925, continues the story of Olaf and Louise and their efforts to build a home of

[15] *American-Scandinavian Review*, 9:61 (January, 1921).

culture. Henry marries but remains more or less unstable and unreliable. Lisa's mind weakens, and for a time, she is an inmate of a sanatorium. After the marriage of the children, Jens casts all discretion to the winds and makes love to a young girl of the community. Much of the life of the last thirty to forty years is portrayed, especially the times of the World War, with its yellow paint, its "bombastic patriots," its farmers' party, and its tragedies. The book closes with the days of returning peace.[16]

One interesting venture, the first of its kind in Norwegian-American literature, the writer believes, is the trilogy of immigrant life by "Arnljot" — Johannes B. Wist. He published the first of the group, *Nykommerbilleder: Jonas Olsens forste Aar i Amerika* (Immigrant Scenes: Jonas Olsen's First Year in America), in 1920; the second, *Hjemmet paa Prærien* (The Home on the Prairie), 1921; and the third, *Jonasville — et Kulturbillede* (Johnsville — a Cultural Sketch) in 1922. The contents of the first two books are indicated by their titles. The last presents the religious controversies of the eighties, the trivialities of local politics, including the county seat fight, and the change in the social and cultural life of a Norwegian-American community. As an immigrant, Wist became well acquainted with the life of both the town and the city.[17] In 1922 he published *Reisen til Rochester* (The Trip to Rochester), a book full of a humor suggestive of Mark Twain. It is an account of the author's trip to Rochester with Bonifacius Bonifaciusen in a 1913 model Ford. The book relates with gusto the adventures of the inexperienced chauffeur and his rather timorous passenger.

One of the most influential men in Norwegian-American belles lettres today is Waldemar Ager, editor and writer.

[16] D. G. Ristad, "Simon Johnson," in *Nordmands-Forbundet*, 20: 152–155 (May, 1927).

[17] Olson, in Sundby-Hansen, ed., *Norwegian Immigrant Contributions*, 135–136.

Mr. Ager was born in Fredrikstad in 1869, and came to Chicago in 1885. Since then, he has been connected with Norwegian-American newspapers in one capacity or another. For a number of years, he was too busy with his editorial work to do much creative writing. *Paa Drikkeondets Konto* (To the Account of the Liquor Evil), 1894, is a group of sketches and poems written against the liquor traffic. His next book *I Strømmen* (In the Crowd), 1899, begins as an excellent romance but ends as a moral tract. The book shows that Ager has the gift of sympathetic characterization. *Hverdagsfolk* (Everyday People), 1908, is a series of town and country sketches. The characterization, especially of children, is sympathetic and understanding.[18]

Fortællinger for Eyvind (Stories for Eyvind), 1906, was translated into English by J. J. Skørdalsvold in 1907. In these stories Ager reveals touches of real art. They are told in the first person, supposedly by Ager to his little son. As the story teller progresses, the child falls asleep, and the speaker allows his thoughts to wander over various topics that interest him. The first story begins thus: "When you are tired of playing, when your little feet need rest, your eyelids become heavy, and you climb upon my knee, and lean your weary little head against my shoulder, then I'll tell you stories." Ager's purpose in writing the book was to criticize the liquor traffic, but one forgets the didacticism and enjoys the stories as stories.

Ager's next book, *Kristus for Pilatus* (Christ before Pilate), won in 1910 the literary prize of the Norwegian Society of America. In 1911, encouraged by the award, Aschehoug and Company of Oslo, one of the leading publishing houses of Norway, for the first time risked printing a Norwegian-American novel. The leading character is the Reverend

[18] Idar Handagaard, "To norsk-amerikanske digtere," in *Nordmands-Forbundet*, 21: 96–98 (March, 1928). This article, the second in a series, deals with Waldemar Ager.

Walther Welde, an idealist and dreamer, who, as the story progresses, realizes "the untenable position he occupies in a congregation and a society in which selfishness and cowardice have the upper hand."[19] It is a copy of Muncazy's famous painting in his study that keeps his conscience painfully alive. Is he for Christ or is he, like Pilate, washing his hands? "Like Ibsen's Brand, Welde is also driven upon the lonely heights, but where Brand would not compromise, Welde could not. Both suffer the same fate, one because of the hardness of his heart; the other on account of his yielding heart."[20] Ager's clear-cut portraits of Pastor Mosevig, pastor of the opposition church of Ellem; of Jorgine; and of the people on Garfield Avenue, — all are unforgetable.

In his next two books, Ager went back to the short story. *Fortællinger og Skisser* (Stories and Sketches), 1913, and *Udvalgte Fortællinger* (Selected Tales), 1918, contain a group of old stories as well as some new. Here are the sympathetic, restrained picture of "Den gamle Prest" (The Old Preacher), the tragedy of "To tomme Hænder" (Two Empty Hands),[21] the story of bashful Johan Arndt and his distrust of life insurance, and that most beautiful picture of the Irish foster parents and their little "Norskie." The last book is really a collection of Ager's best short stories.

Paa Veien til Smeltepotten (On the Way to the Melting Pot), 1917, puts the problem of Americanization in story form. As Ager sees it, the process should be allowed to take its natural course, that the heritage of the foreigner may become a part of America's culture.[22] Ager's next book, *Det veldige Navn* (The Mighty Name), 1923, is a supposed vision from the World War. The volume reveals a lapse from

[19] Josephsen, in *Scandinavia*, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 52.

[20] See Oscar Gundersen's review of *Kristus for Pilatus*, in *Kvartalskrift*, 7:9–11 (April, 1911).

[21] See Kristian Prestgard, "The Tragedy of the Immigrant," in *Scandinavia*, vol. 1, no. 5, p. 38–40 (May, 1924), translated by Knut Gjerset.

[22] Josephsen, in *Scandinavia*, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 52.

standard that has been more than made up in *Gamlelandets Sønner* (The Sons of the Old Country), 1926.[23] Frederik, the eighteen-year-old son of Konsul Christian Berg of Bergen, quarrels with his father and leaves for America. On board ship, he meets Hans Pedersen, an employee of his father. The two are together on the long voyage across the ocean and up the Mississippi River to a little lumber town in Wisconsin. Here Frederik and Hans secure work at the sawmill. Ager pictures vividly the life of the lumber towns, the camps, and logging operations. When the Civil War begins, Frederik, his friends Isak and Ole Brekke, and many other Norwegian-Americans join the Fifteenth Wisconsin Regiment under Colonel Hans C. Heg. Of the war pictures, the battle of Chickamauga and the life in Andersonville prison are the best. Frederik is injured and invalided home to his Gunda; Isak dies in Andersonville prison; Hans Pedersen returns to be married; and Ole Brekke, thanks to his military record, is enabled to marry the girl of his choice. This book shows Ager's sharp insight, his sense of humor, his sympathetic understanding, and his ability to make "unexpected and illuminating turns of speech."[24] These qualities are also illustrated in Ager's latest book, *Hundeøine* (Dog Eyes), 1929, a story of a Norwegian immigrant's life in Chicago. This novel is announced for publication in English by Harper and Brothers.

With the appearance of *Exodus*, 1928, Jon Norstog, the so-called "North Dakota poet and peasant," enters the field of novel writing. The book *Exodus* is described by the author as a conflict between the old and new *kultur*, between the nations within the nation, between our country and the rest of

[23] This book was also published by Aschehoug and Company of Oslo.

[24] Peer Strømme, "Waldemar Ager," in *Symra*, 3:137–148 (1907); review by Arne Kildal, in *Nordmands-Forbundet*, 19:494–496 (November, 1926); Handagaard, in *Nordmands-Forbundet*, 21:96–98 (March, 1928). See also reviews in *Nordmands-Forbundet*, 12:362–366 (August-September, 1919); *Skandinaven*, 53:42 (July, 1919); 61:6 (January 4, 1927); Josephsen, in *Scandinavia*, vol. 1, no. 4, p. 52.

the world.[25] Sigbjørn Djuve, a newcomer, comes to the home of Nils Reine in Wisconsin. The first part of the book consists of a series of philosophical discussions between Sigbjorn and the people he meets on his trips through the various settlements. The rest of the book tells about an automobile trip through Wisconsin with Dr. Halvor Huvestad, relates some pioneer history, and describes Djuve's greed for money and land. This greed affects him both physically and mentally, but nature helps him to regain his mental and physical equilibrium. The story closes with the coming of his beloved Ruth from Norway. The theme of the novel and the characterization are excellent, but the book is ill-proportioned and verbose. It is interesting as coming from the pen of a man who has written mostly lyrics and Biblical dramas.

Thirty-four years ago, a young man in a lonely fishing hamlet in northern Norway left his work as a fisherman and came to America. Today that man is the author of *Giants in the Earth*, a book hailed by reviewers and critics as one of the outstanding novels dealing with American life. Ten years after his coming to America, Rolvaag had acquired a college education. Since his graduation from St. Olaf College in 1906, he has been a member of its faculty. He has written seven novels and a book of essays, and has collaborated on some textbooks for teaching Norwegian.

While a senior at college, Rolvaag wrote his first novel, the manuscript of which he still has and which, he says, is not bad for a first attempt. Rolvaag's first published book, brought out in 1913 under the pseudonym Paal Mørck, was *Amerika-Breve fra P. A. Smevik til hans Far og Bror i Norge* (America Letters from P. A. Smevik to His Father and Brother in Norway). The book tells in an interesting way of the immigrants, their impressions, and their experiences. At first, the letters reveal Smevik's dissatisfaction, but it is not long before he is urging his family to join him. His last letter to Norway

[25] *Minneapolis Journal*, April 1, 1928.

closes: "And when you see Norway's coast sink into the sea, whisper a last farewell from me. I shall never do it myself."

Paa glemte Veie (Forgotten Paths), 1914, is a story of a young woman who offers her life to win her father to God. The book shows Rølvaag trying his hand at a sustained plot, and his trend toward realism. It was not until six years later (1920) that Rølvaag published his next book, *To Tullinger* (Two Fools), a picture of today, a grim tragedy of the love for gold, and some of the "fanatical phases" of the World War. Rølvaag's analysis of the degenerative effects of avarice on his two main characters is unforgetable. In this work he has shown his ability to build his story from one climax to another, up to the final one, and to create atmosphere. From the moment Lars displays the first ten-dollar goldpiece, and a covetous expression appears on Lizzie's face, one has a premonition of the outcome of the book. In his translation of *To Tullinger*, under the title *Pure Gold*, 1930, one feels that Rølvaag has succeeded well in bringing over into the English language the spirit of the Norwegian idiom. In 1921 came *Længselens Baat* (The Ship of Longing), a group of "film pictures," Rølvaag calls them; in reality, a group of powerful portrayals of life both in Norway and in America.

The book that brought Rølvaag to the notice of the American public, however, was *Giants in the Earth*, 1927, published as two volumes in Norway, *I de Dage* (In those Days), 1924, and *Riket Grundlægges* (The Founding of the Realm), 1925. The story of *Giants in the Earth* is a simple one. "Per Hansa, farmer from Norway, brings his wife and children and chattels out of civilization into the great reaches of the Northwest. In company with others of his race, he stakes out a quarter section of land and begins cultivation. What befalls him is more or less in line with the accepted hardships of pioneers. There are famine and cold, superstition and ignorance. By the time the tale is done, a great section of the prairie has

become a new granary of mankind." "No one who had not dwelt in a lonely immigrant community, shared its anxieties, sorrows, and rewards, and studied its human elements, could have written so convincing and searching a book." "Although there is no woven plot, the story mounts steadily in interest, and every incident is perfectly chosen to reveal the psychological drama. It will also give, I believe, a true picture of a great chapter of American history." Time and again, critics refer to the "comic gusto" and "epic force" of the book. All agree that Rølvaag knows his Norwegians and that he feels their "immensities of spirit, their great appetites for land." "*Giants in the Earth* is proof that there never will be a novel which can embrace all America," writes Laurence Stallings. "The racial variants and backgrounds that interweave our patchwork civilization cannot all be woven into the pattern of one book." [26]

In 1929 Rølvaag published *Peder Victorious*, a book in which he continues the story begun in *Giants in the Earth*. This volume traces the growth of Peder Victorious from youth to maturity. With dominant psychological interest, the book is as realistic as *Giants in the Earth*. We feel with the characters their emotions toward one another and toward their natural environment. These two books have been said to constitute an epic of pioneer life and help to explain why the religious, intellectual, and cultural life of the Middle West is what it is.

The best known Norwegian-American woman writer is probably Martha Ostenso. She left Bergen when a child, and for the next few years lived in Minnesota, North Dakota, and Canada. A summer vacation spent near the northwestern frontier gave her part of the material for her first book.

[26] See reviews of *Giants in the Earth* by Laurence Stallings, in *McCalls Magazine*, 55:27, 135 (November, 1927); Allan Nevins, in *Saturday Review of Literature*, 3:806 (July 11, 1927); and C. R. Walker, in *Independent*, 119:44 (July 9, 1927).

Besides this, Miss Ostenso's experience as a teacher in communities predominantly Scandinavian furnished her with local color.[27]

Her first novel, *Wild Geese*, which won a large prize and became a "best seller," is a story of a farming community in the Northwest. Caleb Gare, a malevolent figure of tyranny and greed, who dominates the story, is able to intimidate all his family except Judith. The story deals with his greed and his treatment of his family, and ends with retribution to Caleb and the burning of his acres of flax. The book is melodramatic, and at times the style is awkward. Stuart Sherman says: "She is not verbally fastidious nor a sensitive stylist. She is a little blunt, and quite downright and factual . . . like the saga writers. What she lacks in subtlety, she makes up in strength. She conspicuously excels . . . in conceiving and thoroughly dramatizing character and in the fundamental work of composition."[28]

Miss Ostenso's second book, *Dark Dawn*, 1926, is also a tragic drama of a farming community of the Northwest. Lucian Dorrit, an idealistic youth of twenty-one, finds himself married to Hattie Murker, a beautiful, unloving, domineering woman. At the end of five bitter years, "a belated dark dawn" breaks for Lucian. The book shows some of the same power and some of the same defects as the preceding novel. It lacks humor and is not at all pleasant reading; but it is "dramatic in its clash of character on character."[29] In her following book, Miss Ostenso seems to be nearer to fulfilling the promise of her first book.[30] *The Mad Carews*, 1927, is a story of northern Minnesota, where the Carews have acquired a great deal of land. "Legend has it that the Carew men always take what they want; and when the inevi-

[27] Isaac Anderson, "Scandinavian Immigrants in Recent Fiction," in *American-Scandinavian Review*, 14: 246–248 (April, 1926).

[28] *New York Tribune*, November 8, 1925.

[29] See the review by L. M. Field, in *Bookman*, 64: 632 (January, 1927).

[30] *Independent*, 119: 509 (November, 1927).

table crash comes after their misdoing, then the women pay the price and help them to start their mad careers anew." Bayliss Carew married Elsa Barker of the Hollow, and she had the courage to hold her ground; incidentally, she held her husband.[31] The book is vividly written and embodies a wealth of detail. The novel is melodramatic, but melodrama is inherent in the situation. Miss Ostenso's latest book, *The Young May Moon*, 1929, deals with contemporary life.

We hear much nowadays about regional literature — about life in Iowa and Arizona, in the Carolinas and Montana. To the regional literature of the Middle West belongs the greater part of the Norwegian-American belles lettres. These books are realistic, often stark portrayals of pioneer life, with droughts and blizzards, loneliness and danger from Indians, church services and establishment of schools; local politics and railroad building. Much of the work is of little value, however, except as cumulative evidence of the fecundity of Norwegian-American writers. There is an evident lack of continuity and great unevenness both in quantity and quality. Humor is lacking, too, and descriptions of nature are scanty. This is probably due to the nearness of the writers to the events about which they write. Without the proper perspective they can see nothing but the grim relentlessness of that life. The writer of the future must pay more attention to these things as well as to construction, greater "inclusiveness," and experimentation.

Present-day writers, such as Gustav Melby and Jon Norstog in poetry; Waldemar Ager and Dorothea Dahl in stories of everyday life; Simon Johnson, Johannes B. Wist, and O. E. Rolvaag, writing of the pioneer and contemporary life of the Norwegian immigrants; and Martha Ostenso, exponent of present-day tendencies of realistic writing, "have struck

[31] *Book Review Digest*, 23: 562 (1927 Annual Number, published in February, 1928).

the pace of high endeavor. They have marked out the field, and blazed the trail for a generation of writers." [32]

In discussing Norwegian-American literature, Julius E. Olson, professor of Scandinavian languages and literature at the University of Wisconsin, writes: "One of the functions of literature is to inform posterity. . . . The part that the Norwegian immigrants played and are playing in the Making of America is gradually being revealed in ever clearer outlines in historical accounts . . . and in poems and novels." The value of the larger part of Norwegian-American literature lies in the aid it will give the historian of the future in studying the "constituent races" of America — in the "adequate account of the part the immigrant race from Norway contributed to the resultant formation."

[32] Olson, in Sundby-Hansen, ed., *Norwegian Immigrant Contributions*, 125.

BJØRNSON AND THE NORWEGIAN-AMERICANS, 1880–81

By Arthur C. Paulson

It is not the purpose of this paper to give an exhaustive account of Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's visit to America in 1880–81. The aim, rather, is to show how Bjørnson was received by the Norwegian-Americans [1] and the general nature of their attitude toward him while he was in the United States. Before this can be done, however, it will be necessary to review briefly the reaction of the Norwegian-Americans to him previous to his visit. From the time the first installment of *En glad Gut* (A Happy Boy) appeared in *Emigranten* [2] on January 21, 1861, up to the year 1876, which witnessed the beginning of his attack upon the church, Bjørnson was the popular idol of the Norwegians in America.[3] He was early recognized as the leading poet and author of Norway; his works were widely read, and his letters to *Skandinaven* [4] in 1873 had made his

[1] In this article the term Norwegian-American is used to designate all people of Norwegian descent, regardless of place of birth.

[2] A Norwegian-American newspaper established in 1852. It was published at Immansville, Wisconsin, 1852–1857, and at Madison, Wisconsin, 1857–1867.

[3] Much of Bjørnson's popularity among the Norwegian-Americans was due to a peculiar immigrant conservatism. In America, where everything was new and strange, many an immigrant began to look back upon Norway as representing an almost unapproachable perfection. He forgot its many deficiencies, which had perhaps caused him to emigrate, and remembered only that which was good in its life, its religion and its literature. This Norway, however, was the country he had known before coming to America, not Norway as it had progressed during his absence. The result of this semi-illusion was that with everything pertaining to Norway the immigrant held tenaciously to the "old" and was suspicious of the "new." Consequently, in Bjørnson's *bondenoveller* and early poems the immigrant saw Norway pictured with just enough idealism to fit in with his rose-colored recollections of the land of his birth.

[4] One of the most important Norwegian-American newspapers at the time of Bjørnson's visit. *Skandinaven* was established in 1866 in Chicago.

name a household word even among those who were not familiar with his other works. Not only this, but his political activities, which in Norway were sometimes severely criticized, were eagerly followed and heartily approved of in America.[5]

In 1876, however, a decided change took place. The Norwegian-Americans had applauded Bjørnson when he advanced new ideas with respect to politics, but when he began to advance new ideas with respect to religion and to question the orthodox dogmas of the Lutheran church, it was a different matter. Nor is the reason far to seek. Most of the immigrants were Lutherans, who, because of the great religious revival in Norway during the first half of the nineteenth century, came to America with very conservative and orthodox religious views.[6] Living among strange people, confronted with strange customs and with religious views different from their own, they assumed a defensive attitude and became even more rigid and uncompromising in their religious faith than before. This state of affairs obtained especially among the members of the two strongest church organizations, the Norwegian Synod and the Conference.[7] Therefore, when Bjørnson began to question the dogmas of the Lutheran church, a large part of the Norwegian-Americans felt that he was assaulting one of their most cherished possessions; and the clergy, especially, were not slow to voice their disapproval. The result was a struggle between the great majority of the

[5] The general principle of immigrant conservatism did not apply to Bjørnson's politics (mainly because of his tendencies toward republicanism) to the extent that it applied to his religion and his literature.

[6] At the time of Bjørnson's visit the Norwegian Lutherans in America had separated into five synods, differing among themselves in ceremony, church government, and to a certain extent in doctrine. All five synods, however, were as one in opposing the heresies of Bjørnson.

[7] The Norwegian Synod was officially known as the Synod for the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, but usually called the Norwegian Synod or merely the Synod. The Conference was officially known as the Norwegian-Danish Conference, but usually called the Conference.

Norwegian-Americans, who looked askance at his religious views, and the minority, who approved of them or excused them.

Bjørnson's apostasy, in the eyes of the Norwegian-Americans, had begun even before 1876 in his acceptance of the doctrines of the great Danish scholar and theologian, Grundtvig. But this was as nothing compared with the second step, which he took in 1876 when he declared that Christians must interpret the Bible in accordance with the growing power of the human mind and that if Christianity did not heed the dictates of culture and intellect, it would find itself submerged, "a little forsaken homeless waif, frightened, impotent, driven hither and thither." A year later he denied all belief in eternal punishment and in a personal devil. Next followed his denial of the efficacy of the sacrament of baptism, one of the fundamental principles of Lutheran dogma. Finally in 1879 he threw overboard all belief in the divinity of Christ and became, although still professing to be a Christian, an out-and-out freethinker.[8]

These progressive steps in Bjørnson's break with the church alienated him more and more from his countrymen in America. In their eyes, to accept the religious views of Grundtvig was a serious error; to deny all belief in eternal punishment, a personal devil, or the efficacy of the sacraments, was apostasy; and to deny the Bible, especially those parts dealing with the divinity of Christ, was unforgivable sacrilege. The breach was widened still more by Bjørnson's attempt, through his speeches, letters, and books, to force his views upon the Norwegian people both in Norway and in America.

Such was the state of affairs when Bjørnson came to America in 1880. He was no longer the popular idol that he

[8] Bjørnson's progressive heresies, as the Norwegian-Americans saw them, are reviewed in "Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons Forhold til Kristendommen," in *Evangelisk Luthersk Kirketidende* (Decorah, Iowa), September 19 and 26, 1879.

had been in 1875. The Norwegian Synod through its church paper, *Kirketidende*, had officially branded him as an apostate and a heretic; and the clergy, the real leaders of the people, were most hostile to him. Yet so great had been Bjørnson's popularity, and so great still was the admiration for his peasant stories and his poems, that large numbers of the Norwegian-Americans, although they felt deep pain because of his break with the church, were nevertheless content to forget Bjørnson the apostate, and remember only Bjørnson the author and poet. Furthermore, to offset the opposition of the clergy with their intense antagonism was the loyalty of a small group of intelligentsia, headed by Luther Jæger, editor of *Budstikken*, who in all things were his ardent admirers.[9]

Bjørnson reached America on September 26, 1880, the guest of Mrs. Ole Bull.[10] Whether he came, as Rasmus B. Anderson states, in order that Mrs. Bull might increase her social prestige,[11] or whether, as his opponents intimated, to bolster up his depleted fortune while escaping temporarily from an uncomfortable situation in Norway, need not concern us here. Bjørnson himself declared that he had come to America to study and to observe American institutions at first hand. With this in view he began his sojourn of two and a half months at the home of Mrs. Ole Bull in Cambridge. From Bjørnson's point of view the time was well spent. He learned to speak English with passable fluency; he came in direct contact with the New England school of writers; he met such celebrities as Governor Long and General Grant and even took an active part in the political campaign then in progress;

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[9] *Budstikken* was one of the important Norwegian-American newspapers at the time of Bjørnson's visit. It was established in 1873 in Minneapolis.

[10] Mrs. Ole Bull was the daughter of J. C. Thorpe, a wealthy lumber dealer of Madison, Wisconsin. After the death of Ole Bull in the late summer of 1880, she returned to America and lived with her parents in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

[11] See the *Life Story of Rasmus B. Anderson*, 231 (Madison, Wisconsin, 1915).

he visited the great manufacturing centers and caught intimate glimpses of the methods of the various industries; and everywhere he was honored and fêted.[12]

Meanwhile his arrival in Boston had been heralded by all the Norwegian-American newspapers. Indication of what sort of welcome he might look for in the Middle West is shown even in these first announcements. *Budstikken*, — its editor, Jæger, a devoted admirer of Bjørnson, — after expressing a hope that Bjørnson would pay the Middle West a visit, concluded its article with the following significant paragraph:

> It is vain to hope that Bjørnson himself will meet with general approval, or that all people will be overjoyed at his coming. The Norwegian clergy will undoubtedly give him a lukewarm welcome, and the honorable fathers who preside over the Norwegian Synod will secretly attempt to poison the minds of their parishioners against him. In Norway it is Bjørnson the politician who is a thorn in the flesh; in this country it is Bjørnson the author who is hated and feared. But in spite of everything, we believe that most of the Norwegian-Americans love Bjørnson because he is the author and the politician that he is — and in the name of these people we bid him a hearty welcome.[13]

The question that seemed uppermost in the minds of the Norwegian-Americans was, "Will Bjørnson visit the West?" Bjørnson himself refused to give a satisfactory answer. *Budstikken* reported on October 12, 1880, that his answer to its invitation was, "I have come to America to learn, not to teach." Later (October 27) *Norden* gave two accounts of Bjørnson's plans.[14] The first is a paragraph reprinted from the *Western Minnesota Press* stating that John W. Arctander

[12] For details concerning Bjørnson's sojourn in Cambridge, see H. Ertrem, "Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons Amerikaferd i 1880–81," in *Edda*, vol. 29, part 2 (1929). Parts of Professor Ertrem's article are misleading, for he sees Bjørnson's visit to America largely through Bjørnson's eyes. Consequently he errs where Bjørnson erred, and he, like Bjørnson, fails utterly to understand the attitude of the Norwegian-Americans of that period.

[13] *Budstikken*, October 6, 1880.

[14] *Norden*, an important Norwegian-American newspaper, was established in Chicago in 1874.

has received a letter from Bjørnson saying that if he comes to Minnesota he will be Arctander's guest. The second is a reprint of a private letter from Bjørnson to one of his friends. It contains a typical Bjørnsonian outburst, one not very complimentary to the Lutheran clergy: "No. I shall never come to the West to that hive of preachers. Furthermore, I will not have it said that I have come to America to make money. I have come to America to study, and I can do that here."

In spite of the fact that Bjørnson seemed unwilling to leave the East, the Norwegian-Americans in the West appeared to take it for granted that he would visit them. Committees were appointed in Chicago and in the Twin Cities (Minneapolis and St. Paul) to make the necessary arrangements for his coming. Trouble, however, soon developed in Chicago. Hallvard Hande, the editor of *Norden*, refused to serve on the Chicago committee, and gave his reasons in a public "Declaration." [15]

As may have been seen in the newspapers, I have been asked to serve on committees delegated to prepare a suitable public welcome for Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. I believed that I could take part in publicly honoring Bjørnson as a great author without in any way sanctioning or being held to account for his openly expressed views on the Christian religion; but since I fear that such a course is impossible, I hereby declare that I cannot serve on these committees, and consequently do not wish to be considered a member of them.[16]

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[15] Hallvard Hande was an unusual man. Well educated, a deep thinker, a gifted writer, a clever disputant, he was a giant among the editors of the Norwegian-American press. His outstanding characteristic as an editor was his independence, his refusal to compromise with anything contrary to his own convictions.

[16] *Norden*, October 6, 1880, reprinted in *Evangelisk Luthersk Kirketidende*, October 15, 1880. Professor Eitrem, in "Bjørnstjerne Bjørnsons Amerikaferd," on page 187, says, "We can realize what great power the Synod had in the West and how that power was used from the pitiful [*ynkelig*] *Declaration* which the editor of *Norden*, H. Hande, printed in his newspaper October 18 [*sic*]." Nothing could be further from the truth than to say that Hande was overawed by the Norwegian Synod. Hande was not the type of man to be overawed by anyone. And to call his

Hande's "Declaration" was applauded vigorously by the leaders among the Norwegian-Lutheran clergy. *Kirketidende*[17] on October 15 comments as follows:

We hope that this *Declaration* which we have reprinted from *Norden* will serve as an example to other Christians, especially those who think that in honoring Bjørnson they can honor God's gift to the poet, forgetting that Bjørnson through his agnosticism has misused this gift.

Bjørnson's supporters, on the other hand, were unmerciful in their attacks upon Hande. Jæger,[18] in *Budstikken*, saw in the "Declaration" one result of the intolerance of the Lutheran clergy:

In the announcement printed above one has an excellent example of the demoralizing influence of the Norwegian Synod. That a weak-kneed farmer in Goodhue County should humble himself to escape the discipline of the church [*kirketugt*] is to be expected; but that the editor of one of the best Norwegian-American newspapers should forget his manhood to the extent that he declares publicly that he, against his better judgment, bows to the papal authority of the Norwegian Synod is unthinkable.

We have often wondered how the Synod is able to exert such a powerful influence over our people, but when we see that men who should be the cultural leaders of the people allow themselves to be browbeaten so shamefully, we are amazed that conditions are not worse than they are.

The announcement will have one good result. It will make clear to the people who hitherto have not seen or would not see, the moral degeneracy of an organization which requires men to betray their convictions and professions. To Bjørnson the *Declaration* will give, better than anything else, an understanding of

"Declaration" pitiful becomes almost amusing when one considers the double controversy into which it thrust him — with the Synod on the one hand and with *Budstikken* on the other.

[17] *Evangelisk Luthersk Kirketidende* was the official organ of the Norwegian Synod. In 1880 it was edited by the faculty of Luther College, Decorah, Iowa.

[18] Luther Jæger was also a giant among the editors of the Norwegian-American press. Like Hande he was a well educated man, an independent thinker, and an expert disputant. He was more practical than Hande and a much keener satirist.

the nature of the Norwegian Synod and of the forces opposing him.

Hande, in the issue of *Norden* for October 26, declared that both *Kirketidende* and *Budstikken* had misinterpreted his "Declaration." To *Kirketidende* he said:

> Not to be mistaken, we must state that we did not think that in honoring Bjørnson we "could honor God's gift to the poet, forgetting that Bjørnson through his agnosticism has misused this gift"; that is, if *Kirketidende* by *God's gift* means Bjørnson's gift for writing. What we have thought, and what other Christians and other Synod people have thought, is that we could honor Bjørnson for all the good books he has written without of necessity honoring the misuse he has made of his powers in recent years.
>
> It is well known that in most of Bjørnson's writings there is a strong moral tendency which is in perfect accord with the teachings of Christianity, and in many of his works there is even a strong Christian spirit which until a few years ago made him known as a "Christian" author. The students at Luther College are permitted to read his works, although few of his early works and none of his later ones are read in class. Therefore, the college administration — which is also the editorial staff of *Kirketidende* — must look upon these books as masterpieces. It is natural that other Synod people should look upon them in the same way and should think it proper to honor Bjørnson.

In replying to *Budstikken* Hande is more cutting. He declares that *Budstikken's* statements are absolutely false: he was not forced by the "papal authority of the Synod" to make his "Declaration." He had expressed the same opinion the previous December when he declared that Bjørnson was Norway's Ingersoll, and to this statement *Budstikken* had raised no objections. All in all, he considers *Budstikken* not only dishonest, but unjust. The conflict between *Norden* and *Budstikken* continued for some time longer, but as with so many of the newspaper wars of that period, the fact that the controversy had originally centered about Bjørnson was soon lost to sight, and the whole matter degenerated into a mere quibble.

After the Hande episode Bjørnson's friends proceeded more

cautiously in their preparations to welcome him, hoping to avoid the active opposition of those who looked askance at Bjørnson's views on religion. They stressed through articles in *Skandinaven* and in *Budstikken* the fact that they did not ask Bjørnson's opponents to assist in any demonstration of welcome for him, but merely to do nothing to oppose his coming or to make his stay in the West unpleasant. They maintained that although Bjørnson might be a freethinker, he was an honorable one — and for the sake of what he had done and was doing for the Norwegian people, he must be received with due honor.

Such propaganda might have been successful had not the news of Bjørnson's Worcester, Massachusetts, speech reached the West. There may be some question as to what Bjørnson actually said and what the circumstances were, but the report which reached the West and was accepted by everyone there was that Bjørnson, after being introduced by the Reverend Mr. Ericksen, expressed surprise that any Christian minister could introduce a man who was an avowed freethinker, a man who did not believe in the divinity of Christ.

Bjørnson's remark caused considerable stir in the West. *For Hjemmet*, a periodical which expressed the views of the Norwegian Synod, saw in it further proof that it never pays to honor an infidel. *Verdens Gang* was amazed, and expressed a hope that Bjørnson would never repeat such an act of folly. *Budstikken* did its best to defend his action, but found the task rather difficult, and declared that it would have been better had Bjørnson never made the remark. From this time on, no one dared to hope that the Lutheran clergy would adopt a passive attitude.[19]

In spite of the preparations made for his coming, Bjørnson

[19] *For Hjemmet* was published at Decorah, Iowa. Although not under the control of the Norwegian Synod, it expressed the views of that church body. *Verdens Gang* was published by the John Anderson Publishing Company (the publishers of *Skandinaven*) for those who wished a less expensive paper than *Skandinaven*.

remained in the East, undecided whether or not to visit the West. Finally, in answer to a number of invitations, he wrote a letter to *Budstikken* expressing his views. The following paragraphs are taken from this letter:[20]

When I left Norway, I had no thought of visiting the West. I planned to live in Boston because I looked upon it as the literary and cultural center of America, and because I had but six months in which to study and to gain impressions of representative American men and women. A visit to the West did not fit into such a plan.

In other circumstances I naturally would have been glad to visit the West. I should like to see its scenery, its activities, its people — especially my countrymen there. But if I make such a journey, I must make other arrangements here, and either give up many things or lay them aside to be taken up later with greater vigor.

If this is to take place, however, there must be among my countrymen in the West a real *need* [*trang*] of my coming. This need must show itself, not in desiring to hold festivals in my honor, but in opposing those who at the very thought of my coming began to work against it.

If they will take such a program in hand with life and vigor, I will make arrangements to visit them. Scattered letters, be they ever so many, will never induce me to come. Neither will I come merely to be honored with torchlight processions, for I have already forbidden such demonstrations in my honor, both in Boston and in New York.

To keep my countrymen and other Scandinavians from meeting me, someone has stated that I have been a very ungovernable person — in literature as well as in other fields. Very true. I have never chosen the easy, enjoyable course, which doubtless I could have followed. Neither have I chosen to work for money or for fame. My activities have already drawn me from literature into other fields — into controversies with church and state — and in everything I have been an ungovernable person, to say the least.

But should this — so long as my course is honorable — be a source of offense to the Christians in the West? Who taught them to act thus? Certainly, our great teacher, Jesus of Nazareth, did not, for he was, as we know, not always in perfect accord with his time.

And the Norwegians and other Scandinavians in this great American republic — were they always satisfied with conditions

[20] November 3, 1880.

in Norway? Did they find everything there so splendid, so free, so noble, that they cannot meet a countryman who because of his struggle against those same conditions [*those which caused them to emigrate*] has become an ungovernable person?

Can they really hold anything against him because he has done what they did not do — and probably could not have done — namely, remain at his post struggling to free the people from all the inherited falsehood and wrong which yet encumbers their lives.

We have a word in Norwegian to express such a procedure — we call it *forræderi* [*treason or treachery*].

Editorials in *Budstikken* and in *Folkebladet* show how Bjørnson's letter was received by the two factions.[21] *Budstikken* urges that all Norwegian-Americans demonstrate their eagerness to meet Bjørnson, and suggests the means by which this eagerness may be expressed.[22] *Folkebladet* takes the opposite point of view.[23] It feels that Bjørnson has been acting very strangely for a guest. His first act upon coming to America had been to declare that under no circumstances would he visit "that hive of preachers" in the Mississippi Valley. His next act had been to insult a Christian clergyman in Worcester who had been kind enough to introduce him there. His third act had been to tell *Budstikken* that he would come to the West if there was a real *need* for it, and that the Lutheran clergy had no grounds for opposing his coming. The same editorial then ridicules Bjørnson's ideas about coming west. It asks whether Bjørnson, who is a nationalist and a freethinker, can actually suppose that the Norwegian-Americans are panting with eagerness to hear him; or whether he thinks that he can accomplish in a single visit what forty years of effort on the part of the clergy have failed to do. It admits that if Bjørnson comes the people will stream to hear him, just as they would stream to see Barnum's circus. The

[21] *Folkebladet*, edited by Professor Sven Oftedal, was published in Minneapolis. It came out as a weekly newspaper in October, 1880. From the very first it took a leading part in opposing Bjørnson.

[22] November 3, 1880.

[23] Reprinted in *Norden*, November 17, 1880.

editorial ends by saying that Bjørnson should come to the West — to see how the Norwegian people there have conquered a wilderness, have mastered a strange tongue, and have built themselves homes — but that he should come as he came to America, without waiting for an invitation.

The first definite announcement that Bjørnson would visit the West appeared in *Skandinaven*, November 16, 1880. The article stated that Bjørnson would leave the East shortly before Christmas. The next statement to appear in *Skandinaven* carried the information that he would reach Chicago shortly before Christmas. That he planned to make an extended lecture tour is shown by the announcement of Rasmus B. Anderson which appeared in *Norden*, December 15.

> All those living outside of Chicago who wish to engage Bjørnson to deliver an address should communicate with me as soon as possible. Bjørnson has asked me to arrange his itinerary, to close contracts, and so forth. He will not be able to lecture in many places; therefore, those who desire to engage him should write me soon.

From the above statement it is evident that Bjørnson made definite plans for his tour sometime during the latter part of November, 1880. Rasmus B. Anderson in his autobiography, written thirty-five years later, gives us the impression that it was not planned at all, but that it was the outcome of a quarrel between Bjørnson and Mrs. Ole Bull.[24] According to Anderson's version, Bjørnson grew heartily tired of his life at the home of Mrs. Bull, resented dancing to the dictates of his hostess, and finally fled to New York and thence to Chicago after a terrible scene between the two. Anderson's account is most interesting, but highly questionable.

Bjørnson arrived in Chicago on the Tuesday before Christmas, and delivered his first lecture the following Sunday. This was the speech which he regularly gave on his tour. He began by reciting his own poem "Olav Trygvason," and

[24] *Life Story of Rasmus B. Anderson*, 338–339.

with this as a background spoke of the Scandinavian peoples and of their problems. It was a good address. Both friend and foe admitted it. According to Rasmus B. Anderson:

> He chose for his subject "The Norwegians, Swedes, and Danes." In his address he gave a rapid historical sketch of these peoples, and then pointed out the chief characteristics of each of these nationalities. He did this with such consummate skill that the Norwegians in his audience thanked God they were Norwegians; the Swedes were delighted that they were from Sweden, and the Danes would rather be Danes than anything else in the world.

Had Bjørnson confined himself to this one speech, or to speeches of a similar nature, the opposition toward him would have vanished, and his friends would have been vindicated. But Bjørnson could not refrain from airing his religious views, and in a second speech, which he called "The Prophets," he attacked the orthodox view of the Bible, stating that the Bible could not be taken literally, that patriarchs were nothing but heathen gods with Hebrew names, and that the prophets were unable to foretell events to come. From this background he developed his arguments for an idealistic outlook upon life, and he ended with a passionate plea for truth. As was to be expected, this speech aroused great indignation among the church people, and even incurred the censure of his friends. *Budstikken* remarked rather cynically that to understand Bjørnson's religious views one would find it cheaper to buy a copy of Bob Ingersoll than to attend the lecture.[25] At Madison, Wisconsin, when Bjørnson insisted on speaking about the prophets, Anderson, his best friend in America, refused to introduce him or to occupy the stage with him.

The church was especially indignant, and the clergy ordered their parishioners to absent themselves when Bjørnson lectured. Nothing, perhaps, portrays better the horror with which the church regarded Bjørnson than an article by the Reverend H. Halvorsen which appeared in *Kirketidende*, February 11,

[25] January 11, 1881.

1881.[26] Halvorsen first directs his attacks against Bjørnson's apostasy.

As it seems, Bjørnson began his lecture by saying that he has never attacked Christianity *as such*. But anyone who has attended his lecture and who has a little conception of what constitutes Christianity can understand that his lecture is a direct attack on our beliefs. . . .

Therefore, when Bjørnson comes with statements that in modern times such and such discoveries and such and such progress and research, especially in the fields of philology and biology, have proved the teachings of the Bible false, he is attacking the Christian religion. And when he tells us that there is no revelation from God, that there are no devils, that Jesus Christ is only a great teacher and not God, I do not know what to think of his statement that he is not opposing Christianity *as such*. It is brazen beyond all conception, to say the least, for he is insulting the people he is attempting to cajole.

Had he himself been truthful he would have severed his relations with the Norwegian State Church and would have said both in Norway and in America: "I am no longer a Christian; I believe in neither God nor Devil; I believe only in the progress and the evolution of the race; I am an out and out Darwinist."

In the same article, however, Halvorsen's keenest thrusts are directed against the church members who insist on attending Bjørnson's lectures.

What are we to think of it [*the fact that church members have been present when Bjørnson lectured*]? Is it not pitiable evidence of the lack of responsibility with which many so-called Christians regard their faith? What does it signify that they call themselves Christians and belong to a Christian congregation when a mocker can make them laugh and clap their hands at his sneers because he knows how to sneer in a humorous way and in poetic form?

And later:

But to you, my countrymen and fellow Christians, who have listened to this man and have applauded when he lampooned the Bible and the Church; to you I would put this question. Do you

[26] Halvorsen was a Norwegian Synod clergyman at Coon Prairie, Wisconsin; one of the stout champions of the conservative wing of the church. From 1882 to 1886 he was one of the leaders in the famous *Naadevalgstriden*.

know what you have done? Do you realize that the God of Heaven and earth saw you at that moment? You call yourselves Christians! Yet was it in such a way that the early Christians showed their belief in Christ? No. They would have preferred being flayed alive rather than do anything unseemly in the eyes of God. But you — in frivolity you sit and applaud and laugh at a most bitter and shameless attack on our Christian faith. There is no name for such an act. It is the profoundest treason, the most debasing betrayal of Christ. It is only the mercy of God that the jaws of hell did not open and seize you in the midst of your applause and laughter.

In a later issue of *Kirketidende* the Reverend H. A. Stub, one of the most popular ministers in the Norwegian Synod, goes even further than Halvorsen in denouncing those church members who have been present at a Bjørnson address. He denounces both speeches — the political as well as the religious — as equally pernicious.

Bjørnson has given one or both of two lectures, the one on politics and the other on *The Prophets*. In both he attempts to break down Christianity. In the first he denies all portions of the Bible which treat of governmental authority, and when he speaks of the prophets, he strikes Christ directly in the face and says, "Tvi dig" ["Faugh!"].[27]

The following paragraph taken from the same article by Stub illustrates the almost foolish lengths to which otherwise level-headed Lutheran clergymen went in their attack on Bjørnson. Stub had evidently never attended any of Bjørnson's lectures, yet he gives an account of one as he imagines it to be.

Let us imagine what takes place. There is a large theater or hall. A mass of freethinkers, agnostics, Freemasons, Oddfellows, saloonkeepers, and others of a similar type are gathered together, and in their midst are a few church members. All have come to hear Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson, who has announced that he will speak either on politics or on religion; and it is obvious to all that he will speak against God's Word — for it is the ancient truths of the Bible that stand between him and his work as a freethinker. . . . Now Bjørnson comes forward and is greeted

[27] *Evangelisk Luthersk Kirketidende*, February 25, 1881.

with a burst of applause. If the church members do not applaud, no one takes note of it, for in such a great gathering one cannot be distinguished from the other. Moreover, the rule here is *Silence gives consent.*

Perhaps the most amusing part of Stub's article is the plan which he proposes that Christian congregations follow when Bjørnson is lecturing in their community. The congregation as a whole is to remain away, but if the members wish a report of the lecture they are to elect a committee of two or three who shall attend the address and bring a report back to the congregation.

But if the clergy were extreme and in many ways unreasonable, there were other people equally extreme and unreasonable in their praise of Bjørnson. Nothing, perhaps, makes this fact more obvious than the mass of complimentary poems which every enthusiastic admirer of Bjørnson with some ability at versification felt inspired to write. Judging from the quality of these "poems," one has serious doubts whether Bjørnson felt highly honored, for the majority have little to commend them except enthusiasm.[28] Closely allied to the poetical effusions of Bjørnson's friends were the prose extravaganzas with which they greeted him on his arrival in the West. The following, printed in *Skandinaven*, December 28, 1881, appeared at the time Bjørnson was in Chicago.

> We welcome you to the metropolis of the Northwest, as our countryman, as the celebrated poet of Europe, as the steadfast champion of popular liberty, as the fearless spokesman of truth, and as the true interpreter of the modern spirit of progress — light and the sane rule of reason instead of darkness, and the recognition of the rights of man given body and life in Church and State. Welcome, thou King of Poets from the land of our fathers![29]

[28] A poem of this type, by Erik Hago of Blue Mounds, Wisconsin, appears in *Skandinaven*, November 30, 1880.

[29] Professor Eitrem, in *Edda*, vol. 29, part 2, quotes the first part of this article as an example of the enthusiastic reception accorded Bjørnson upon his arrival in Chicago. It is entitled "Welcome, thou skald, dear to the people of the far North."

Another way by which the friends of Bjørnson showed their enthusiasm for him was by attacking his opponents most bitterly. The Lutheran clergy, of course, received their full share of abuse. Stub was especially ridiculed for his article in *Kirketidende*. In a clever editorial *Budstikken* makes sport of his plan for having committees appointed by the various congregations to attend Bjørnson's lectures.[30] It suggests to the Norwegian Synod that it appoint two of its strongest "Missourians"[31] to accompany Bjørnson on his tour to take notes on his speeches and at the same time to attempt to bring him back to the Christian fold. It warns the Synod, however, that if they adopt this plan they will never find it convenient to print the report, as it will give Bjørnson too much publicity.

The attack of Bjørnson's friends, however, was centered primarily on the Reverend Sven Oftedal, one of the leading clergymen of the Conference and the editor of *Folkebladet*. The attack had really begun as early as December 2, when Oftedal declared that Bjørnson's motive in coming west was for the most part mercenary. But the utterance which caused the greatest furor was one printed in *Folkebladet* in the latter part of January.

> Bjørnson lectured last Thursday at the Pence Opera House, giving the same address he delivered in Chicago. The house was packed. The anticipation had been keen, but the general feeling after the lecture was that of disappointment. Many received the impression that Bjørnson has little respect for his countrymen in America; but this is not surprising considering the associations he has made while in this country. He would scarcely deliver such an address in the smallest seaport town in Norway. . . . At the circus one looks for the clown. Is it not the same with Bjørnson?

Needless to say, the friends of Bjørnson were furious. *Budstikken* raved at Oftedal, declaring that he could never open his mouth without having a toad jump out. It goes on to

[30] March 15, 1881.

[31] The name given the conservatives of the Norwegian Synod, so called because of their close adherence to the tenets of the German Missouri Synod.

state that at no time has a great and honored guest received such treatment as Bjørnson at the hands of Oftedal. If there is a particle of honor in the Conference, of which he is one of the pastors, it will demand that he make an explanation of what he means by " Bjørnson's associations " and by the statement "At the circus one looks for the clown."

From this time on, almost every issue of *Budstikken* contains some letter or some editorial flaying Oftedal for his attitude toward Bjørnson. For the most part the editorials are keen and cutting, but the letters and special articles sent in by the subscribers are usually dull — sometimes absurd. There is considerable evidence in many of the articles that the attacks are directed not so much by love of Bjørnson as by animosity toward Oftedal.

Strange as it may seem, there appeared to be but one leader among the Norwegian-Americans able to preserve a somewhat unbiased attitude toward Bjørnson. This man was Hallvard Hande, the editor of *Norden*. As a Lutheran minister he was unflinching in his condemnation of Bjørnson's apostasy. On the other hand, he was liberal enough and broad-minded enough not to condemn everything that Bjørnson had done or was doing. Hande showed this attitude clearly in his advice to the Norwegian-Americans to attend Bjørnson's political speech, declaring there was nothing antichristian about it. He ridiculed Stub's point of view and maintained that much of what Stub had said about Bjørnson had more place in Holberg's comedies than in the official organ of the Norwegian Synod. Such tolerance as was expressed by Hande was extremely rare during Bjørnson's visit to the West.[32]

About Bjørnson's tour itself there is little to say that is pertinent to this study. In many of the larger cities and towns receptions were held in his honor; and wherever he lectured, the Norwegian-Americans thronged to hear him, sometimes

[32] For a warning against fanaticism and a plea for justice, see *Norden*, March 2, 1881.

coming from distances as great as twenty or thirty miles — a long trip in those days for the purpose of attending a single lecture. The number of people who were present when he lectured may be judged from Anderson's statement that with an average admission price of fifty cents, Bjornson cleared over ten thousand dollars. That his audiences were drawn more by his great name than by his message is obvious from the fact that his return engagements were usually unsuccessful.[33] Throughout his whole tour there was but one audience that made any serious demonstration against him. This was at Albert Lea, Minnesota, where the people in the audience openly mocked him, and are even reported to have come prepared to shower him with rotten eggs and cabbages.[34]

The attitude of the church may have kept many people from attending the two lectures — especially the second — but there is evidence that it sometimes had a contrary effect. As to the oft-repeated statement that the church would discipline its members (put them under *kirketugt*), nothing came of it. Two members of the congregation at Forest City, Iowa, were reported to have been disciplined, but from the older inhabitants of the town the writer has been unable to find anything to substantiate this report.

About the middle of February, 1881, one senses a new antagonism toward Bjornson, an antagonism and an opposition quite different from that of the clergy. One senses it in the indifferent, almost hostile, attitude of *Skandinaven*, which hitherto had been one of his staunchest supporters; in the letters of the subscribers printed in the Norwegian-American press; and finally in Bjornson's last speech in Chicago — the speech of an angry, disgusted, disillusioned man.

Skandinaven showed its change of attitude toward Bjørnson in the constantly diminishing amount of space devoted to

[33] *Life Story of Rasmus B. Anderson*, 343; *Skandinaven*, April 19, 1881.

[34] See articles by Erik L. Petersen in *Budstikken*, April 26, 1881, and in *Skandinaven*, May 10, 1881.

his praise, and in the constantly increasing number of unfavorable articles it printed about him. Finally, in answer to the following letter, the editor voices his own ideas concerning Bjørnson.[35]

Why is it that when Norway's greatest authors lecture in a Norwegian community, their first address draws a large audience, but their second address, if given, is poorly attended? Recently when Bjørnson spoke a second time in the large City Hall in Madison, he had but thirty people in the audience.

To which the editor replied:

We agree with the correspondent that neither Bjørnson nor Janson, were they to tour the West again, could draw large audiences, but this does not mean that a good lecturer should not win popular approval, provided he choose a suitable topic and deliver his address in a way that is easily understood. As far as Bjørnson is concerned, he has attained high rank among the writers of the North, and few can equal him in his own field. Unfortunately both for himself and for his audiences, he has not kept to that field, but has plunged recklessly into questions of politics and religion — fields where he, to the sorrow of his friends and the joy of his enemies, presents a truly pitiable figure. Unless he soon comes to his senses, we fear that the highly respected and dearly loved Bjørnson will degenerate into a wild visionary, entirely without stability, rushing from one vagary to another.

Even more characteristic of the new opposition is a letter published in *Skandinaven*, March 8, 1881, which includes the following:

Recently there has been too much fuss made in the papers about Kristofer Janson, Ole Bull, and Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson. That may be all right for some people, but here where I live, not one in ten gives a continental about such stuff. . . . And now Bjørnson, the noble and true friend of the people, comes here to deliver lectures, but will not give a single one unless he receives a hundred dollars for it. In spite of this fact, he maintains that he is doing it for the good of the people and not for his own benefit.[36]

[35] *Skandinaven*, April 19, 1881. Svein Nilsson was the editor of *Skandinaven* at the time of Bjørnson's visit.

[36] The letter was written by "N. N." of Benson, Minnesota.

But it is Bjørnson's last speech in the West, delivered in Chicago, April 9, 1881, which reflects most clearly the opposition against him. Bjørnson had expected the Norwegian-Americans to receive his message kindly, and was deeply chagrined when he found that they took it more or less as a joke.

In his speech Bjørnson first discusses the religious situation.[37] After telling a tale of Magnus Olavsson and Einar Tambarskjælver, he states that this story illustrates the fact that Norway had reached a level of culture enabling it to understand the need of an organized society and of the "higher laws of love" — consequently the people were ready to accept Christianity. To reach this state, however, had taken a long time in Norway, and so it has among other peoples. Millions of years of evolution have been necessary to bring the people to a point where they can understand the teachings of the Bible. The idea that man degenerated from a perfect state to the worship of stocks and stones is an inane fable which, if it persists, will show that wisdom is no longer a force in the world.

Bjørnson then goes on to say that the "materialists" who, the "believers" say, are wallowing in sensuality after having thrown aside the ten commandments, are in reality wise men who, although they have lost their belief in God for lack of material evidence, live honorable and upright lives. Carl Vogt, for example, has more knowledge about life than all the preachers in the West put together. Yet the "believers" maintain that such people are the scum of the earth. It makes him angry to talk to "believers" of this type.

> When I, after much research and reading, declare that the Patriarchs are old heathen gods, they retort with mocking laughter. Yet tell me why the Jews did not name their children after Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob until after the Captivity. It perhaps makes no difference whether they were gods or not, but that those who are the leaders of the people [*the clergy*] should

[37] The report of this speech is taken from *Norden*, April 13, 1881.

strive to keep the people ignorant and should aid them in their opposition to me is ignoble. But my work is not yet finished. When I return to Norway, a new periodical shall be published and its editor shall print an American edition. This will continue my work.

Why is this such a vital question with me? Because I have been on the other side and know the difference. . . . When I had passed the period of doubt, I determined to devote my life to the work of enlightenment. Children still sit in schools learning fables instead of science. . . . The ideals of the people are crushed under Christianity.

Bjørnson then states that freedom is the ideal of the time. Yet the clergy say that this ideal is the work of the devil. Another ideal is nationalism: the clergy say this is the worship of strange gods. People should progress with these ideals in the van. But Christians cannot do this until they get rid of their dogmas. They are afraid to know the truth because they have not enough faith in themselves.

Toward the end of his address, Bjørnson gives his own impressions of the Norwegian-Americans. Among other things he says:

The people of the West are a hardy people. At Fargo the farmers [*husmænd*] drove into town in sleds, and I had hundreds of such "sled men" in my audience. They were somewhat drunk, all of them, but whether I looked at them or spoke to them, they appeared strong. But the moment they heard that I was an agnostic, they became frightened as little children. They can go filthy and unwashed, drink themselves full as pigs, swear and carouse: and yet in spite of all this, they can take the sacrament the following Sunday, for they are "Christians." At one place I heard a man swear a fearful oath that he would never listen to a man who was not a believer. At another place I listened to the conversation of a large assembly of Norwegians, and there was swearing and uproar. The clergy should work against all this filth and drinking. They have done much, it is true, and have established schools; but what do I care for schools which do not dare to give instruction in the natural sciences and in which the sturdy farmer boys are driven as if in harness! Had the Norwegian-Americans sought knowledge and enlightenment in the public schools, the second and third generations might have become outstanding men in both Minnesota and Wisconsin. But the clergy have set themselves decidedly against this.

In closing Bjørnson says that there has been much misinterpretation of his statements. He has learned much in the West, however, and wishes to express his thanks for this.

I wish to express my thanks for the honorable welcome that I have received — it has been most striking here in Chicago. In closing I wish to say: Stand up as men, you who are free. Although there may be but one here and there at first, soon there will be thousands. Be upright; be truthful; nothing can conquer you then. And now again I wish to thank you. I have never exchanged a hostile word with anyone in America. I wish you well, all of you. Farewell.

No speech could have brought more "sorrow to Bjornson's friends or joy to his enemies." All felt that it was a complete vindication of the attitude of the clergy and of Bjornson's other enemies. Not even his friends tried to defend his statements with any vigor, for friend and foe alike seemed to feel that he had shamefully abused his countrymen, and that he, like Janson, had enjoyed their hospitality only to repay them with insults.

Two statements, the first by Rasmus B. Anderson, Bjørnson's best friend in America at that time, and the second by the Reverend Erik L. Petersen, one of his most consistent opponents, will illustrate how the Norwegian-Americans felt after the Chicago speech. Anderson's view is found in his autobiography.

In his farewell address in Chicago, he [*Bjørnson*] went out of his way to ridicule and speak ill of his countrymen in America. He described them as ignorant, uncouth, and as unfit for cultured people to associate with. He spoke of how the atmosphere became unbearable in the halls where they were assembled, more or less intoxicated and their clothing reeking with all sorts of bad odors. His complaints were vastly exaggerated and came with little grace from one who had been received with so much hospitality and honor.[38]

Petersen is more outspoken in his denunciation.[39] Speaking

[38] *Life Story of Rasmus B. Anderson*, 342.

[39] *Skandinaven*, May 10, 1881. Petersen was an Episcopal clergyman with headquarters at Faribault, Minnesota. He had known Bjørnson in

first with respect to religion, he laments the spiritual loss which Bjørnson's visit has entailed. Then turning from the religious to the ethical, he maintains that Bjørnson's actions have been rather questionable, to say the least. Bjørnson first came to America to "study." He next decided that he might come to the Middle West, and mass meetings were immediately called in Chicago and in the Twin Cities to prepare a suitable welcome for him. Then Rasmus B. Anderson was appointed "manager" of his trip west, and the whole thing degenerated into an ordinary lecture tour. It is an honorable thing to earn money, but if this was Bjørnson's object, what was the purpose of all his "acting," his circumlocution, and all his false pretenses? "Both Bjørnson and Janson came here to make money. One of Bjørnson's best friends in Chicago told me that the whole trip was the result of a well laid plan of Bjørnson's friends to aid him in bettering his financial condition."

Petersen next discusses Bjørnson's attitude toward his countrymen in America. This attitude, he believes, can scarcely be called decent. Bjørnson is really an aristocrat, and the word *people* to him is but a poetic term, or else is applied to the raw *vulgus* to whom a person in need of money extends a helping hand. There is little love of the people in such a person. Once he has their money he is not careful of what he says. In Chicago he scolded his countrymen for being dirty pigs, reeking with whisky and filthiness. One would have to search far to find greater insolence than this. Especially shameful was his treatment of the people of Fargo. They had received him especially well, and yet he characterized them as the worst of the lot. On the other hand he said nothing about the people of Albert Lea, who openly mocked him, a fact which the *Albert Lea Skandinaven* [*sic*] deplores, but which

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Norway, where he had been connected with the theater. For several years after his arrival in America he was one of the leading literary critics among the Norwegian-Americans.

in reality is a credit to the people of that town. The trouble with Bjornson is that he knows nothing of the actual life of the Norwegians in America. All he has seen of the Northwest has been through car windows or from lecture platforms. Most of what he has heard has been from the lips of snobs. But even had his statements been true, he, as a "man of the people," should have shown them how to better their condition instead of calling them dirty pigs and telling their pastors to teach them how to wash. And yet he wishes to make these swine agnostics, unbelievers, and renegades to their Christian faith. "We can scarcely imagine a worse treatment of the people, a more thankless person, or a meaner 'guest.' Were it not for the fact that his speech has been published in the newspapers, one could scarcely believe him capable of delivering such an address."

Petersen then goes on to say that the Norwegians in America, though they may be crude and somewhat uncultured, are not pigs; that their homes often compare favorably with those of the "Yankees." He states further that he has been in America for eight years — Bjornson but six months. The reader may believe whom he will. Finally after discussing and refuting as best he can Bjornson's attacks on the Bible, Petersen ends his article with the following paragraph:

> The experience of the past two years should teach the Norwegian-Americans to guard against these expensive visits — visits which begin with such promise and end with such disappointment and vexation. If Norway has nothing better to offer us than her freethinkers, she had better keep them to herself. We in America can get along very well without them.

Nothing can better characterize Bjornson's visit to America from the point of view of the Norwegian-American than Petersen's declaration that it began with promise and ended in disappointment and vexation. Bjornson, in spite of his break with the church, had been popular when he arrived in America in September. Had he used a little diplomacy, his popularity

would have increased. But Bjørnson never was diplomatic or tactful and in America he failed utterly to take into consideration the intense conservatism of the Norwegian-Americans or their fiercely intolerant attitude toward any form of apostasy. As a result he left America in April hated and maligned.[40]

So far as the Norwegian-Americans were concerned, nothing could have been more unfortunate for Bjørnson's reputation as a man and as an author than his trip to America. The Norwegian-Americans continued to read his works and seem to have taken as keen delight in his early works as ever before; but they could not forget the fact that the author himself was now an agnostic, and although they continued to praise his *bondenoveller*, his historical dramas and his poems, they regretted that the Bjørnson whom they had loved so well had deserted his calling and had disappointed them.

[40] Since this study was written, Mr. Carl Hansen has published a series of articles in *Minneapolis Tidende* about Bjørnson's visit to America. His detailed account of the controversy between *Budstikken* and the Reverend Sven Oftedal is especially interesting.

THE BEGINNINGS OF ST. OLAF COLLEGE

By I. F. Grose

St. Olaf's School, now St. Olaf College, at Northfield, Minnesota, represents the growth of an idea which dominated the mind of the Reverend Bernt Julius Muus. He was pastor of Holden and adjoining congregations in Goodhue County, Minnesota, for a period of forty years, from 1850 to 1890.

Before the incorporation of St. Olaf's School on November 6, 1874, the Norwegian-American Lutherans had established schools of higher learning largely for the purpose of providing the needed pastors to minister to the constantly increasing number of Norwegian Lutherans immigrating to this country and making their homes throughout the Middle West. It was chiefly for this purpose that the Norwegian Lutherans, later known as the Norwegian Augustana Synod and the Conference, in conjunction with the Swedish Lutherans, now popularly known as the Swedish Augustana Synod, identified themselves in the fifties with the Illinois State University of Springfield, Illinois. After severing their synodical ties with the Northern Illinois Synod, these two bodies, impelled by the same motive as before, established a school at Chicago and, two years later, moved it to Paxton, Illinois. The Fielsen Seminary, which was in operation for a year, had the same end in view. Augsburg Seminary primarily prepared men for the ministry. Luther College, at Decorah, Iowa, was originally designed to be a theological seminary. It never became one, but operated as a preparatory school for men who intended subsequently to take up the study of theology. For that reason Luther College was popularly known as *presteskolen i Decorah* (the ministers' school in Decorah). And one comes across this expression even today, although its graduates in large numbers now engage successfully in vocations other than the

ministry. The founders of the college must have had a presentiment that this would be the case, as they called the moneys gathered for the erection of the main building *Universitetsfondet* (the University fund) and the cause *Universitetssagen* (the University cause).

St. Olaf's School differed from the aforementioned institutions in its initial aim. Its purpose was, first, "to give the Christian confirmands of both sexes a higher education than the schools of their home communities could give them" and, second, "to direct the moral conduct of the students."[1] Most of the Norwegian-American Lutheran schools of higher learning established up to this time primarily expected their graduates to enter the ministry. St. Olaf's School designed to give the Christian youth a general education. It aimed to develop intelligent and well-informed men and women, whatever sphere of action they might enter when their days of schooling were at an end. The school intended to produce an intelligent laity as well as an intelligent clergy.

This policy did not exclude preparing men at St. Olaf for subsequently taking up the study of theology. Pastor Muus was much interested in getting an intelligent ministry. This fact becomes apparent upon an examination of the acknowledgments made for moneys received by the treasurer of the Norwegian Synod in *Kirkelig Maanedstidende*. Up to June 15, 1871, Muus's congregations (Holden, Vang, Gol, Urland, Dale, and Wangen's Prairie) had, through his efforts, contributed to *Universitetsfondet* $8,547.45,[2] not counting other contributions which he made to Luther College during the sixties. He was interested in every phase of Christian education. He established parochial schools in his congregations. He left no stone unturned to secure teachers for these schools. It was in this manner that he secured the services of Johan

[1] This statement of purpose is found on the inside of the front cover of the first brochure of St. Olaf, published in 1875.

[2] *Kirkelig Maanedstidende*, 16: 191 (June 15, 1871).

Kildahl, the father of Dr. J. N. Kildahl. He met the Kildahl family in Red Wing, Minnesota, when the Kildahls were on their way from Norway, with no particular destination in mind. He ascertained that Mr. Kildahl was a teacher and Mrs. Kildahl a weaver. As Muus needed a parochial school teacher and Mrs. Muus a weaver, the outcome of the chance meeting was that the Kildahl family accompanied him to Holden, and thus started the nine-year-old Kildahl on his distinguished and useful career as a pastor and a teacher. Lacking schoolhouses, Pastor Muus turned the farm log-houses into schoolrooms, the school staying usually a week at each home. He was much concerned about the welfare of his confirmands, not only before but after they had taken the vow of confirmation. From the year 1850, when Pastor Muus came to this country and took up his work as a minister of the Gospel, he cherished the idea of establishing an academy or some institution where confirmed Christian young people could get more advanced training than that obtained in the parochial and the common schools. It was not until ten years after his arrival in America that he could make a small beginning toward the realization of his cherished ideal. Hindrances barred the way. His countrymen, many of them, did not realize the value of a Christian education. He had to arouse their interest in schools in general, and particularly in those of higher learning. He lacked competent instructors and adequate schoolrooms. In 1860 he made his first attempt at establishing the academy which was at least the forerunner if not actually the beginning of St. Olaf's School.

Fortunately Pastor Muus has over his own signature left us an account of his venture. In it he reveals to the reader his yearning to establish an academy, the obstacles he met with, the name of the teacher procured, the nature of the schoolroom used, the subjects offered, and the difficulties of overcoming the inertia and lack of interest in the project among the people he sought to benefit.

He heads the account with the caption: "Academy in Holden, Minnesota."[3] He then says:

As the editors [of *Kirkelig Maanedstidende*] ask for information concerning my academy, I take the liberty of giving them the following facts. From the very beginning of my ministry, I was keenly conscious of the great benefits which would accrue from establishing a high school in which the youth of the congregations could acquire a better education than could be obtained in our parochial and common schools. But many obstacles were in the way. Among these I may mention lack of room and of competent instructors. By building an addition to the parsonage, we have acquired available room in the basement. I have discovered T. Jesme, whom I think both competent and willing to teach. The course of study I originally outlined was as follows: Bible, three hours; Christian Faith and Doctrine (*troeslære*), two; Church History, two; English, six; Norwegian, six; Geography, two; History, two; Penmanship, three; Arithmetic, three; Physics, two; Geometry, one; Drawing, one; Singing, four. The attendance, however, was so small that for financial reasons I had to drop Physics, Geometry, Drawing, and Singing. The inadequate preparation of the pupils entering required the giving of an additional number of hours in Penmanship and Arithmetic. The first term I personally lost money on the affair, but I do not like to drop it. I am firmly convinced that such a school will be of much value to the coming generation. I will therefore try another term of three months. It will begin on January 7 [1870]. The charge for tuition will be $10 for three months. I know it will take some time for my countrymen to realize the importance of this cause. For this reason I will try another term. If they have no use for such a school, I cannot afford to lose any more money on this venture. I cannot even afford to lose the money I have already lost thereon. I have offered my countrymen a valuable help for the education of their youth. If the undertaking fails, I shall assume no blame for the failure.

Yours most respectfully,
B. J. Muus

Holden Parsonage, November 19, 1869

Was the Holden Academy discontinued at the end of the aforementioned three-month term? The records are silent. But in 1874 we find something like it operating in the parsonage. Pastor Muus kept a private tutor (*huslærer*) for his

[3] *Kirkelig Maanedstidende*, 14: 383–384 (December 1, 1869).

own children. He did not send them to the parochial and the common schools. The private tutor gave Muus's children instruction in the four R's (Religion, Reading, 'Riting, and 'Rithmetic). In 1874 we find that additional subjects were introduced, at any rate Latin, and that other children besides the Muus children were given instruction in the parsonage school. Besides Birgitte, Nils, and Jens Muus, we find Isaac Huseth and George Taylor Rygh in attendance. Later also came Peter O. Floan, Jens Nordby, and Ole K. Haugen. The subjects studied at this school enabled Rygh and Isaac Huseth to enter *Quinta* or the Senior Academy Class at Luther College upon their matriculation at that institution.

Several intimate that Dr. J. N. Kildahl was a pupil in the Holden Parsonage School. If he was, he must have attended the school prior to 1873. Be that as it may, he was confirmed by Pastor Muus, and soon after the confirmation, Pastor Muus made Kildahl's parents two visits to persuade them to let their son go to Luther College. They finally consented though they felt they sorely needed his services at home on the farm. The Reverend H. B. Kildahl says that his brother was not overburdened by this world's goods. He put all his belongings in a wheat sack and carried it on his shoulders when he went to Luther College.

Miss Birgitte Muus, now Mrs. B. Klüver, gives a very sympathetic account of her father in a letter to the writer, dated at Oslo, Norway, July 3, 1929. She lets us get some glimpses of the Holden Parsonage School, or *Latinskole*, and of her father's interest in St. Olaf. She says:

> Father spoke of St. Olaf when I was only six or seven years old. Father wished young people to get an education. He often made the remark that learning was a burden to no one, but was valuable for both men and women in every circumstance of life. No one can rob a person of his learning. He thought education would be useful for a woman in home-making. And if a woman remained unmarried, schooling and learning would better enable her to look out for herself.
>
> The first teacher that we had was Student Jensen from Kristi-

ania, Norway. He was our teacher for only a year or two. Then we had Student Monsen, very good in Latin.[4] Next to Religion, Latin was regarded as the most important subject. Father sent to Norway for these teachers. He paid their passage across the sea, and gave them a certain salary a month, plus board and room. Monsen stayed with us for years, eight or nine years. At brief intervals we had as teachers Blickfeldt, Kirkeby, Jesme (only in Norwegian and English), and Thorleif Homme. All are dead, except Homme, who lives as pastor emeritus in Norway. Boys having a taste for study were welcomed as pupils. Among them were Isaac Huseth, son of Halvor; Jens Nordby, son of the miller in Wanamingo, and George Rygh. I cannot recall whether or not J. N. Kildahl attended. I think he did.

It was a preparatory school. Father desired very much that the pupils should become interested in Latin. And, above all, Father desired that the young should at all times and in all walks of life be thoroughly familiar with the Lutheran faith and doctrine. That idea was uppermost in his heart and mind. I can never forget the earnest manner in which he prepared the confirmands for confirmation. The whole life of the confirmand was to be directed by the instruction. At the close of every confirmation day he [*Muus*] returned home with a cheerful heart. He based the future hope of the church on the confirmands. Some young people used two or three years for receiving instruction preparatory to taking the confirmation vow. And usually they regarded such a practice as being perfectly proper. I attended the confirmation class for three years. I committed to memory, word for word, Pontoppidan's *"Double" Explanation.* And I have been very glad ever since that I was held to the work.

Father was sad, grievously sad, at times. But just a little word of encouragement would cheer him. And then we were able to share our joys together. Together we rejoiced in the most insignificant flowers, in shrubs, in trees, in all kinds of animals and living things. He would not permit us to disturb the mosquito on his hand until it had satisfied its hunger. I cannot forget the many delightful buggy-rides we had. I frequently took him to and from the station. I accompanied him visiting the sick. Especially do I recall rides with him on moonlight nights when he smoked his long pipe and I managed the lines. He spoke of the courses of the heavenly bodies and told me the names of the constellations and stars. As I listened to him, I thought it would be delightful to die — if for nothing else, to make a closer

[4] Dr. George Taylor Rygh gives Monsen's full name as Søren Tordenskjold Monsen.

acquaintance with the heavenly bodies. Father was wont to say that if he had not become a minister of the Gospel, he would have become an astronomer. On such occasions he enjoyed himself like a child.

Pastor Muus's love for St. Olaf, Mrs. Klüver expresses thus: "The weather would have to be a cyclonic storm indeed which could keep Father from going out canvassing or working for St. Olaf whenever he had any time at his leisure."

His experiences in starting an academy in the parsonage showed Pastor Muus the necessity of arousing the Norwegian-American Lutherans to a realization of the fact that they ought to give their children a higher education, even though they did not intend to have them become ministers or teachers. His experiences also showed him the necessity of establishing the school at some point having direct railroad connections. The Holden Parsonage, twenty-eight miles from Red Wing, twenty-three from Faribault, and twenty-three from Northfield, the nearest railroad stations, attracted no pupils from afar at that time, when transportation had not advanced far beyond the stage of the ox-drawn wagon.

Pastor Muus reached the conclusion that he would have to establish his school in some town or city having railroad connections. To most people Red Wing would seem to have been the suitable place for such an institution, as it had at the time a comparatively large population of Norwegians. Pastor Muus, however, did not favor Red Wing.[5] Receiving encouragement from Pastor Muus at the annual meeting of the Norwegian Synod held in June, 1874, in the Holden Church, Harold Thorson of Northfield offered to the church at that synod meeting "5 acres of land, valued at $1,500, and $500 in cash" if it would establish and maintain an academy on this land.[6] The synod meeting adopted a resolution thanking

[5] Some of this account is taken from the writer's *Fifty Memorable Years at St. Olaf* (Northfield, 1925).

[6] Minutes of the Board of Trustees of St. Olaf's School.

Thorson for his offer and encouraged the idea that an academy be erected but assumed no obligations for financing the undertaking. Pastor Muus later called a meeting of the ministers and influential laymen in the territory contiguous to Northfield. He and Thorson received no encouragement from the meeting, except from the Reverend N. A. Quammen of Christiania, Dakota County, Minnesota, who was heartily in favor of the project and promised them coöperation.

Seeing that he could receive no material assistance from the church as a whole or from the clergy in this territory in particular, Pastor Muus, supported by Thorson and Pastor Quammen, decided upon undertaking the establishment of the school by assuming, himself, full responsibility for its success or failure. Thorson was given the work of interesting the citizens of Northfield in the project. Two civic meetings were held, on October 1 and 15, 1874, which resulted in the pledging of $5,400 to the institution if it were established in the city. At the second meeting the following resolution was unanimously and enthusiastically adopted:

"We extend to our Norwegian brethren a cordial invitation to locate their college at Northfield, and we pledge them our hearty sympathy and support."

Before the citizens' meeting of October 15 adjourned, it was decided to set afoot negotiations for the purchase, as temporary quarters, of lots 4, 5, 6, and 7 in block 24, and the two buildings thereon formerly occupied by the public schools of the city.

Northfield's enthusiastic October meetings reinforced by substantial pledges so encouraged Muus that he felt justified in taking up the matters of forming a close corporation and of making arrangements for opening the school at the earliest date possible. He chose as fellow incorporators Harold Thorson of Northfield, O. K. Finseth of Kenyon, K. P. Haugen of Holden, and Osmund Osmundsen of Nerstrand, the five members consisting of one clergyman, one merchant, and three

farmers. The articles of incorporation set forth the aim of the institution in these words:

> The general purpose of the corporation is to give higher education to pupils fifteen years of age or over and to preserve them in the true Christian faith as taught by the Evangelical Lutheran Church, nothing to be taught in contravention of the Apostolic, Nicene, and Athanasian creeds, of the *Unaltered Augsburg Confession,* and of *Luther's Small Catechism.*

Events now followed each other in quick succession. The four lots and two buildings thereon were procured by the recently organized St. Olaf Corporation for a consideration of $2,500. The Reverend Thorbjorn N. Mohn, serving a church in St. Paul, was secured to be the head of the school. The following announcement was published in the press:[7]

> St. Olaf's School, an evangelical Lutheran high school in Northfield, Minnesota. Purpose: 1. To give the confirmed youth a higher education for practical life than the home schools can do; 2. To direct the moral conduct of the students. Subjects taught in the lowest class: Religion, English, Norwegian, History, Geography, Penmanship, Singing. Tuition for half a year (from January 8, 1875, to July 1) $15; room in the school building, $10; board, whatever it will cost. Pupils furnish their own bedclothes, towels, light, and laundry. Write to T. Mohn, in care of H. Thorson, Northfield, Minnesota.
>
> B. J. Muus, President Board of Trustees

January 8, 1875, marked the opening of the institution. The day was used for dedicating the four-room, two-storied building and for registering the students so that they could begin classes the next day without loss of time. The first year's attendance totaled fifty. Some of these first pupils are now dead, and most of those living have attained the allotted age of three score and ten.[8]

[7] *Fædrelandet og Emigranten,* December 10, 1874.

[8] The names of the first students at St. Olaf are: Marie Aaker, later Mrs. Theodore Bordson of Alexandria, Minnesota; Sissel K. Haugen, later Mrs. A. T. Brandvold, Faribault; Esther Thompson, later Mrs. L. C. Rugland, Ashby; Guri K. Lie; Betsy K. Lie, later Mrs. G. N. Steile, Bristol, South Dakota; Martha T. Aabye, Kirsti T. Haugen, Theoline

St. Olaf's School had an auspicious beginning. And yet, hardly two years later, on October 26, 1876, its first crisis occurred. It was at the time evident that the future existence of the school depended on the erection of a new building. Thirty acres of land, what is now known as Manitou Heights, had been purchased for $1,250. But the clergymen who had been called in to give counsel in the matter deemed the erection of a new building inadvisable. These ministers would have felt much relieved if the corporation had decided to wind up its affairs at the time. Muus, supported by Thorson and Quammen, took a firm stand in favor of building. The determining factor for Muus's bold stand was the fact that in November and December, 1874, he had canvassed and obtained from various members of the congregations of Holden, Vang, and Gol, sums of money which were to be used for the erection of such a building. He felt that he would be untrue to the donors if he did not use the money for the purpose for which it had been collected. Muus won the day. The Board decided to build. We happen to have the list of names of at least some of the men who thus saved St. Olaf's School in that particular crisis.[9]

The question arises: Where and when was St. Olaf College

Sophie Vestly, Berit A. Hoverstad, Ella E. Skare, Marie Grinager, later Mrs. E. Engebretson, Princeton, Minnesota; Anne Marie Hanson, later Mrs. H. P. Solstad, Fisher; Ingeborg Strandemo (or Strandemoen), Peder K. Haugen, Edward J. Erstad, Sivert E. Grinde, Ingebrikt J. Hegvik, Nils P. Langemo, T. Langemo, Ole O. Romundstad, Ole S. Vesledal, Anders T. Ellingbo, Ole K. Ulsaker, Knut O. Bakko, Knut O. Bratvold, Erik H. Stenbakken, Tjøstel A. Baanhus, Ole G. Opdal, Haakon O. Næset, Erik P. Skajem, Knut O. Holien, Bernt J. Lie, Sievert E. Lie, Anders T. Aabye, Torger H. Brokke, Theodor Thorson, Christen O. Holen, Ole O. Hellerud, Hans H. Rinde, Andrew Anderson, Nils E. Grinde, Svein O. Braaten, Thompson, North Dakota; Osten O. Bø, Guttorm A. Melland, Hans M. Hanson, R. O. Støve, Howard, South Dakota; Bersvend Johnson, Minneapolis; H. Holstad, M. Onstad.

[9] The names of these donors were entered by Muus in a ledger, which he later turned over to St. Olaf College. In 1915 the names were printed in the St. Olaf College *Bulletin*, "endowment number," p. 3–4.

born? Some will give the off-hand answer: In Lawyer Perkins' office in Northfield, when the articles of incorporation of the school were signed on November 6, 1874. It is true that the institution was then technically and legally brought into existence. But it was in reality begun in the Holden Parsonage. Pastor Muus had cherished the idea for years. He established in the parsonage a temporary academy. It differed from St. Olaf's School in name, in place, and in the composition of the teaching personnel, but it taught practically the same subjects as did St. Olaf's School in the first years of its history and it sought the advancement of the identical purpose. Muus's daughter says her father "spoke of St. Olaf when I was only six or seven years old." This must have occurred even before the academy at Holden had been started. Ole Huseth, in the years just before his death, frequently attended the annual Foundation Day festivities at St. Olaf. Half in jest, half in earnest, he would say that he was the original St. Olaf student because he was one of the three pupils attending the academy in the Holden Parsonage in 1869. Knut Groven and Augon Brokke are supposedly the other two. Dr. George Taylor Rygh, who a few years later was a pupil in this school, writes:

> Historically, the Holden Parsonage private academy, with the well-beloved classically trained Mr. Monsen as its patient and interesting teacher, forms the tap-root of the mighty St. Olaf College oak, which today spreads its branches far and wide throughout the land. St. Olaf College is the marvelous development of that small beginning. St. Olaf College might well have sprung full-grown from the sunset heights of Northfield without any preliminary academy, but as a matter of history, it started as a model classical school in a dingy room over the Holden Parsonage kitchen. This room, by the way, had been a doctor's office, and in our schooldays was still redolent of drugs and medicines, and decorated by sundry cobwebby bottles and paraphernalia.[10]

[10] George Taylor Rygh to the writer, August 28, 1929.

In sum and substance the present investigations indicate that St. Olaf's School got its name and legal existence in Northfield in 1874 but in reality began its work in the Holden Parsonage, Goodhue County, in 1869, the concrete manifestation of an idea which the Reverend Bernt Julius Muus had cherished almost to the consuming of his being since his coming to America in 1859.

SOME RECENT PUBLICATIONS RELATING TO NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN HISTORY

COMPILED BY
JACOB HODNEFIELD

The editorial board has had under consideration for some time a plan to publish each year in STUDIES AND RECORDS a list of recent writings in the Norwegian-American historical field. The project as inaugurated in the present volume by Mr. Hodnefield of the James J. Hill Reference Library of St. Paul is tentative as regards both content and form; and suggestions of methods by which such an annual checklist can be made more useful will be welcomed. It would be especially helpful in forwarding this enterprise if copies of books, pamphlets, and articles in the field indicated were sent to the managing editor by authors and publishers.

In the main the publications listed herewith were issued in 1929 and 1930, but a few items from 1928 are included.

T. C. B.

Anderson, Rasmus B. Leif Erikson dagen, 9de Oktober. SØNNER AF NORGE, 26: 296–298 (October, 1929).

A brief exposition of Leif Ericson's discovery of America and related events, issued in connection with the establishment of Leif Ericson Day, October 9, in Wisconsin. An English edition was issued in pamphlet form for distribution to Wisconsin schools.

Bache, Soren. Søren Baches dagbokoptegnelser under sit ophold i Amerika aarene 1839–1842 og 1843–1847. NORSK UNGDOM, 15: 185 187; 16: 6–7, 22–23, 38–39, 51–53, 69–70, 83–85, 99–100, 115–116, 148–150, 164–165; 17: 4–6, 21–23, 38–39, 55–56, 71–72, 87, 103 (December, 1927; January—August, October, November, 1928; January—July, 1929).

The diary of Søren Bache is one of the most important diaries of Norwegian observers in the pioneer period. An English translation is to be published by the Norwegian-American Historical Association.

Baensch, Emil. Thorvald Solberg, register of copyrights. WISCONSIN MAGAZINE, 6: 39–40 (February, 1928).

A biographical sketch accompanied by a portrait.

Belsheim, E. O. Det norsk-amerikanske skolevæsen. SKANDINAVEN ALMANAK OG KALENDER, 1930, p. 43–45.

A survey of the educational efforts of Norwegian-Americans.

Bjorge, Hans P. Article in FERGUS FALLS DAILY JOURNAL, February 26, 1929.

An account of emigration from Norway in 1868 and settlement in Otter Tail County, Minnesota.

Bjorge, Paul. Jordbrug her og hinsides Atlanteren. NORDMANDS FORBUNDET, 22:147–151 (May, 1929).

A comparison of agricultural processes in Norway and in America.

Blegen, Theodore C. Den norske utvandring som den gjenspeiler sig i sange og digte: utdrag av et foredrag. NORDMANDS FORBUNDET, 22:109–122 (April, 1929).

An account of Norwegian emigration as reflected in contemporary songs and poems.

——— The "America letters." Avhandlinger utgitt av det Norske Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo. II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse, 1928, no. 5. Oslo, 1928. 25 p.

A revision of a paper read at a session of the Sixth International Congress of Historical Sciences in Oslo, August 16, 1928.

——— Guri Endreson, frontier heroine. MINNESOTA HISTORY, 10:425–430 (December, 1929).

A letter of 1866 by Guri Endreson.

——— Norwegian-American Historical Association publications and publication plans; report of the managing editor, presented at the triennial meeting of the association held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on January 7, 1930. [Northfield, Minnesota] 1930. 15 p.

Bygdelagenes Fællesraad. Aarbok og julehilsen, 1929. P. L. Slagsvold, ed. Minneapolis, Lund Press [1929]. 188 p.

The year book and Christmas greeting of the federation of *bygdelags*, with short sketches of member societies. The volume contains obituaries of N. T. Moen and O. J. Kvale and an article on the origin of the *bygdelag* movement by A. A. Veblen.

Clark, J. M. Thorstein Bundy Veblen, 1857–1929. AMERICAN ECONOMIC REVIEW, 19:742–745 (December, 1929).

A short biographical sketch and an estimation of Veblen as an economist.

Dieserud, Juul. "Skandinavia" ikke "Nordlyset" var det første norsk-danske blad i Amerika. NORDMANDS FORBUNDET, 22:14–17 (January, 1929).

The author contends that *Skandinavia* and not *Nordlyset* was the first Norwegian-Danish paper in America.

Eckers, H. A. Congressman Michaelson. NORDEN, 1:15–16 (December, 1928).

A sketch of M. A. Michaelson, who represents a Chicago district in Congress.

——— Doktor Ludvig Hektoen. NORDEN, 1:10–11 (December, 1928).

A biographical sketch of this well-known pathologist.

——— Gymnastik og idrett. Norwegian-American athletic association. NORDEN, 1:15–16 (February-March, 1929).

An account of the activities of the Norwegian-American Athletic Association.

Carl Ben **Eielson.** CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, 71 Congress, 2 session, vol. 72, no. 86, p. 6398–6399 (March 26, 1930).

A biographical sketch and eulogy.

Eleva Lutheran Church. History, 1893–1929. Eleva, Wisconsin, Committee on history [1929]. 15 p.

Elim Lutheran Church, Randall, Iowa. History, 1868–1929. Randall, Iowa, Committee on history, 1929. 29 p.

A short historical sketch, with illustrations and portraits, the constitution, and a list of members.

Fremmegaard, A. "Little Norway" i Wisconsin. NORDMANDS FORBUNDET, 22:418–420 (December, 1929).

An account, with illustrations, of "Little Norway," a model of a Norwegian *gaard* constructed by Mr. Isak Dahle of Chicago at Mount Horeb, Wisconsin.

Gimmestad, L. M. Bygdelagsbevægelsen. SKANDINAVEN ALMANAK OG KALENDER, 1929, p. 97–103.

A summary of the *bygdelag* movement, followed by a list of forty-seven *bygdelags* now active.

Gjerset, Knut. Den nyere tid i det norske Amerika; utdrag av et foredrag holdt i Decorah. NORDMANDS FORBUNDET, 22:75–77 (March, 1929).

An abstract of an address given at Decorah, Iowa, on conditions among the Norwegian immigrants and their descendants in America.

——— Det norsk amerikanske museum i Decorah, Ia. SØNNER AF NORGE, 25:380–386 (December, 1928).

A sketch of the Norwegian-American museum in Decorah, with illustrations.

——— A Norwegian-American *Landnamsman*: Ole S. Gjerset. Norwegian-American historical association, STUDIES AND REC-

ORDS, 3:82–100 (1928); reprinted in MINNESOTA HISTORY, 10:273–293 September, 1929).

An account of emigration from Norway and settlement in Minnesota as experienced by an educated Norwegian farmer and his family.

Grevstad, Nicolay A. Norwegian-American hospital, Chicago. [Chicago] 1930. 23 p.

Contains a concise historical sketch.

Hall, J. O. En julekvæld i nybyggerhytten paa prærien i Nord Dakota; en sand beretning fra syttiaarene om en norsk farmer-families frygtelige oplevelser. SKANDINAVEN, 63:5 (December 22, 1929).

Relates the experiences of a Norwegian farmer family in the seventies on the Dakota prairies in conflict with Indians and bad weather.

Hansen, Carl G. O. Glimt fra livet i det norske Amerika. MINNEAPOLIS TIDENDE, January 3—April 18, November 7—December 26, 1929; January 2—March 13, 1930.

A series of historical articles, continued from 1928, based largely upon contemporary newspaper material. The installments from January 3 to April 18, 1929, deal primarily with pioneer settlements in Rock County, Wisconsin. The installments beginning November 7 tell about Bjørnstjerne Bjørnson's visit to America, 1880–81.

Haugen, Nils P. Pioneer and political reminiscences. [Madison, Wisconsin Historical Society, 1930] 198 p. Reprinted from WISCONSIN MAGAZINE OF HISTORY, vols. 11, 12, 13.

The autobiography of a prominent Norwegian-American, beginning with an account of emigration from Norway in 1854. Contains the following subdivisions: Getting a start in Wisconsin; Lawyer, legislator, and railroad commissioner; Career in Congress; The years 1895 to 1901; State tax commissioner; Taxation under the La Follette régime; Under McGovern and Philipps and in Montana; Concluding observations.

Hobson, J. A. Thorstein Veblen. SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW, 21: 342–345 (October, 1929).

An appraisal of the economic and sociological work of Thorstein Veblen, with biographical information.

Hodne, Halvor. Rev. Carl Johan Eastvold, D. D. LUTHERAN CHURCH HERALD, 13:1165–1167 (August 13, 1929).

A biographical sketch and encomium of a prominent pastor and former president of the Hauges Synod.

Olaf Hoff. NORWEGIAN-AMERICAN TECHNICAL JOURNAL, 1:4 (December, 1928).

An unsigned article dealing with a noted engineer.

Holand, Hjalmar R. Coon Valley: en historisk beretning om de norske menigheter i Coon Valley. Skrevet i anledning av kaldets 75-aarsfest i 1928. Minneapolis, Augsburg publishing house, 1928, 272 p.

An historical account of the Norwegian Lutheran churches of Coon Valley, Wisconsin. The book opens with a descriptive chapter on Coon Valley, which is followed by others on the first settlers, pioneer days, communal affairs, and Coon Valley soldiers in the Civil War. Eleven chapters (p. 63–159) are devoted to accounts of churches and pastors. Chapter 18, on some of the sons and daughters of Coon Valley, contains twenty-one short biographical sketches of contemporaries, with portraits. Perhaps the most valuable portion of the book is chapter 19 (p. 172–263), consisting of pioneer biographies. There are sketches of some 450 individuals, in many cases accompanied by photographs.

———, *ed.* Early days in Ephraim; a collection of sketches prepared for the occasion of the seventieth anniversary of the dedication of the Ephraim Moravian church. Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, The Door County historical society, 1929. 40 p. (PENINSULA HISTORICAL REVIEW, vol. 3, no. 1.)

The fact that Ephraim was largely settled by Norwegian immigrants lends interest to this item. The pamphlet includes articles on "Ephraim in the making," by Clement Houler; "A brief account of the Ephraim Moravian church," by George Westphal; and "Reminiscences of a pioneer," by Carl Nelson.

——— Norway House i Canadas skoger. NORDMANDS FORBUNDET, 22:377–381 (November, 1929).

A description and account of Norway House on Lake Winnipeg.

Hovde, Brynjolf J., *transl.* and *ed.* Three civil war letters from 1862. Norwegian-American historical association, STUDIES AND RECORDS, 4:74–91 (1929).

The first two of these letters are devoted mainly to a description of the battle between the "Monitor" and the "Merrimac," and the third describes certain aspects of the peninsular campaign of 1862 under General McClellan. The letters were printed in the Norwegian newspaper *Morgenbladet* (Christiania), under date of May 27 and July 24, 1862.

Høverstad, Helge. De norsk-amerikanske bygdelags indflydelse paa vort land og paa vort folks kultur. SKANDINAVEN ALMANAK OG KALENDER, 1929, p. 70–75.

Considers the influence of the Norwegian-American *bygdelag*, especially on the culture of the Norwegian-Americans.

Innes, Harold A. A bibliography of Thorstein Veblen. SOUTHWESTERN POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE QUARTERLY, 10:56–68 (June, 1929).

Jacobsen, Clara. Fra bedstemors ungdom. DECORAH-POSTEN, July 12, 19, 1929.

An account of the writer's grandmother, Gro Gjermundsdatter, who, with her husband, Jacob Abrahamsen, came to the Muskego settlement in Wisconsin in 1848.

——— Fra mors unge dage. DECORAH-POSTEN, July 26, August 2, 1929.

The author continues her account of pioneering, telling in this case the story of her mother.

Jacobson, Abraham. Chapter of Dakota history in the early days. HILLS [Minnesota] CRESCENT, February 6, 13, 20, 1930.

This account, translated into English by J. N. Jacobson, tells of a missionary trip made by the author into Dakota Territory in 1861. With a party of eight settlers traveling in covered wagons drawn by oxen, the Reverend Mr. Jacobson started west from Decorah, Iowa, reaching Vermillion three weeks later.

Josephsen, Einar. Norske kræfter i amerikansk politik. NORDMANDS FORBUNDET, 23:9–11 (January, 1930).

Brief mention of Norwegian-Americans in politics at the present time and of the offices they hold.

Kittelson, Thor. Article in MILAN [Minnesota] STANDARD, September 20, 1929.

An account of emigration from Norway in 1850 and of settlement in Dane County, Wisconsin.

Knudsen, Dina. Nordmænds virke i Amerika. SKANDINAVEN ALMANAK OG KALENDER, 1929, p. 45–48.

A brief survey of the activity of Norwegians in America.

Lake, Ivan Clyde. Knute Reindahl, maker of violins. WISCONSIN MAGAZINE, 6:357–358 (December, 1928).

Larsen, Karen. The adjustment of a pioneer pastor to American conditions: Laur. Larsen, 1857–1880. Norwegian-American historical association, STUDIES AND RECORDS, 4:1–14 (1929).

A study of a prominent church leader's reactions to the American environment, with special attention to the language problem.

Larson, Henrietta, *transl.* and *ed.* The sinking of the "Atlantic" on Lake Erie; an immigrant journey from Quebec to Wis-

consin in 1852. Norwegian-American historical association, STUDIES AND RECORDS, 4:92–98 (1929).

Part of a letter written by Erik Thorstad from the "Town of Ixonia, Jefferson County [Wisconsin], November 9, 1852," published in *Christiania-Posten*, February 11, 1853.

Linnevold, Wm. Totningsettlementet i Glenwood Township, Winneshiek County, Iowa, 1853. TOTENLAGETS AARBOK, 1929, p. 39–46.

Account of an Iowa settlement of Norwegians from Toten. Printed also in *Decorah-Posten*, May 24, 31, 1929.

Little Cedar Congregation. 1859–1929. Souvenir of the seventieth anniversary celebration of the Little Cedar Congregation, Adams, Minn., November 22–24, 1929. [Minneapolis, Augsburg publishing house, 1929] 16 p.

[Lomen, G. J.] *comp.* Genealogies of the Lomen (Ringstad), Brandt, and Joys families. Northfield, Minnesota, Mohn printing company, 1929. 361 p.

Reviewed in *Minnesota history*, 11:89–90 (March, 1930).

Lund, Hans E. Litt om de første settlere fra Toten i Harmony og omegn, Minnesota. TOTENLAGETS AARBOK, 1929, p. 46–48.

An account of the first settlers from Toten in and about Harmony, Fillmore County, Minnesota.

Lundquist, G. A. Potential Lutherans in the United States. THE FRIEND, 6:4–6 (August, 1929).

A statistical survey.

Lutheran Churches of the World. Edited by Alfred T. Jørgensen, F. Fleisch, and Abdel Wentz. Minneapolis, Augsburg publishing house [1929]. 432 p.

This work, published for the executive committee of the Lutheran world convention, includes an account of Norwegian-American Lutheran churches.

Main, Angie Kumlien. Annals of a Wisconsin thresherman. WISCONSIN MAGAZINE OF HISTORY, 11:301–308 (March, 1928).

The simple story of Ole Christian Olson, 1848–1927, farmer and thresherman.

Malmin, C. K. Den første lutherske kirke i Amerika. NORSK UNGDOM, 16:192–193 (December, 1928).

A brief description and history of the famous Muskego church.

Minder fra nybyggertiden. DECORAH-POSTEN, March 15—June 14, 1929. A series, containing "'Little Norway' i Amerika, et slegtens mindested ved Mount Horeb, Wisconsin,"

March 15; an account by Onon Bjørnson Dale of Wisconsin pioneering and California gold digging, March 22, 29, April 5, 12; Johan Storseth, "En pioner ved Puget Sound," April 19, 26; Mrs. Elsie Wilson, "Nybyggerdage i Minnesota" [Rock Prairie to Fillmore County in 1855], May 3; H. O. Knutson, "Pionerdage i Redwood County, Minnesota," May 10; Mrs. H. T. Hoven, "Pionerdage i Goodhue County, Minnesota," May 17; Wm. Linnevold, "Totnings-settlementet i Winneshiek County, Iowa," May 24, 31; Wm. Linnevold, "Fra det ældste norske settlement paa Washington Prairie," June 7, 14; Wm. Linnevold, "Om Company E, 38th Iowa Infantry Volunteers" (based on diary and reminiscences of George M. A. Linnevold), June 21, 28, July 5, 1929.

Mitchell, W. C. Thorstein Veblen, 1857–1929. NEW REPUBLIC, 60:66–68 (September 4, 1929).

Mjøsenlaget. Mjøsenlagets aarbog, 1928–1929. Olav A. Kvisgaard, ed. Decorah, Iowa, Anundsen publishing company, n. d. 143 p.

A year book. Contains biographical sketches of prominent members.

Naumdøla Samband. Naumdøla, no. 1. Einar Hilsen, ed., n. p., 1929. 333 p.

A year book. Contains as a supplement (p. 305–333) "Snaasingen," edited for Snaasalaget by P. O. Bugge.

Nessa, J. T. En biografi. VISERGUTTEN, 36:6 (March 28, 1929).

An autobiography of an immigrant of 1877, outlining a trek from Nerstrand, Norway, terminating in Portland, Oregon.

Nordfjordlaget. Nordfjordlagets aarbok, 1929. Carl D. Kolset, ed. Decorah, Iowa, Posten press [1929]. 60 p.

A year book.

Norfjor, H. M. Historiske minder. TRØNDERLAGETS AARBOK, 1929, p. 55–58.

Chicago recollections relating to Norwegian-American interests, written in 1926.

Nornborg, John. Balgaardslegten fra Verdalen. TRØNDERLAGETS AARBOK, 1929, p. 44–52.

A genealogy of the Balgaard family.

Norwegian-American Historical Association. Studies and Records, vol. 4. Northfield, Minnesota, 1929. 159 p.

——— Travel and Description Series, vol. 3. *See* Ræder, Ole Munch.

Numedal, Kongsberg og Omegn Lag. Aarbok no. 1 for Numedal, Kongsberg og Omegn Lag for 1929. [Decorah, Iowa, Anundsen publishing company, 1929] 94 p.

The first year book of this new society.

Odland, Martin W. The love between Knute Nelson and his mother. THE FRIEND, 6:6–7 (May, 1929).

Opdal Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church. Florence, Minnesota. Golden anniversary, 1879–1929. October 20, 1929. n. p., n. d. [8] p.

A brief historical sketch and description.

Opdalslaget. Opdalslagets aarbok, 1929. Kristine Haugen, ed. Minneapolis, Augsburg publishing house [1929]. 74 p.

A year book. Contains a number of biographical sketches.

Peterson, Guy A. Normanna Sangerkor of La Crosse, oldest Norwegian singing society in America. WISCONSIN MAGAZINE, 6:242–243 (September, 1928).

Pond, Alonzo W. Primitive methods of working stone, based on experiments of Halvor L. Skavlem . . . Beloit, Wis., Logan museum, Beloit college [1930]. 143 p. (LOGAN MUSEUM BULLETIN, vol. 2, no. 1.)

Relates the methods employed by Mr. Skavlem in the working of stone, including the making of arrowheads. Mr. Skavlem belongs to a pioneer Norwegian family of southern Wisconsin.

Preus, J. C. K., *comp.* Widening the frontier; sketches and incidents from the home mission field. Second edition. Minneapolis, Augsburg publishing house, 1929. 229 p.

A large number of sketches by Lutheran churchmen and others relating to frontier experiences and incidents connected with the expansion of the Lutheran church among Norwegian immigrants.

Ræder, Ole Munch. America in the forties; the letters of Ole Munch Ræder, translated and edited by Gunnar J. Malmin. Minneapolis, published for the Norwegian-American historical association by the University of Minnesota press [1929]. 244 p. (Norwegian-American historical association. Travel and description series, vol. 3.)

Travel letters, 1847–1848, of a Norwegian scholar who was sent by his government to study the American jury system. Reviewed in *Minnesota history*, 11:82–83 (March, 1930), by Joseph Schafer; and in the *New York Times* for December 16, 1929.

Rohne, J. Magnus. Clausen, Claus Lauritz (Nov. 3, 1820—Feb. 20, 1892). DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY, 4:166–167.

A short biographical sketch of a Dane who did pioneer church work among the Norwegian Lutherans in the early settlements in the West.

——— *transl.* and *ed.* Report of the annual meeting of the Haugean churches held at Lisbon, Illinois, in June, 1854. Norwegian-American historical association, STUDIES AND RECORDS, 4:15–42 (1929).

A report of the first meeting, 1854, under the chairmanship of Elling Eielsen, of the followers of Hans Nilsen Hauge in this country. This group organized, in the following year, the synod which is known by Eielsen's name, out of which sprung later also the Hauges Synod.

Rølvaag, O. E. Vikings of the middle west. AMERICAN MAGAZINE, 108:44–47, 83, 86 (October, 1929).

Heroic aspect of the conquest of certain portions of the Middle West by descendants of the Vikings.

Rønning, N. N. The founding of Red Wing Seminary: address . . . at the fiftieth anniversary. THE FRIEND, 6:4–5 (September, 1929); LUTHERAN CHURCH HERALD, 13:1372–1374 (September 24, 1929).

The story of the founding of Red Wing Seminary in 1879 by the Hauges Synod of the Norwegian Lutheran Church.

Sandro, Gustav O. The immigrants' trek; a detailed history of the Lake Hendricks colony in Brookings County, Dakota Territory, from 1873–1881. [Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Sessions printing company, 1929] 47 p.

Schafer, Joseph. Immigration and social amelioration. Norwegian-American historical association, STUDIES AND RECORDS, 4:54–62 (1929).

Sigdalslaget. Oplysninger om Sigdøler, Eggedøler og Kryllinger i Amerika. Martin T. Braatelien, comp. [Decorah, Iowa, Anundsen publishing company] 1929. 191 p.

A year book.

Simonson, Joseph C. Some men of our church in public life. LUTHERAN CHURCH HERALD, 13:330–331 (March 5, 1929).

This article is accompanied by portraits of Henrik Shipstead, Peter Norbeck, G. N. Haugen, and L. S. Swenson.

Smedal, G. Normænds virke i Amerika. SKANDINAVEN ALMANAK OG KALENDER, 1930, p. 40–43.

A short survey of the activities of Norwegian-Americans.

Solum, Reidar. Norsk indvandring til Brasil. NORDMANDS FORBUNDET, 23:3–6 (January, 1930).

A brief account of Norwegian immigration to Brazil.

Stabæk, Tosten Kittelsen. An account of a journey to California in 1852, translated by Einar I. Haugen. Norwegian-American historical association, STUDIES AND RECORDS, 4:99–124 (1929).

This account was written some forty years after the date of the journey. The Norwegian original of this paper was published in *Aarbok* no. 14 for Numedalslaget, 62–85 (1928).

Stephenson, George M. The mind of the Scandinavian immigrant. Norwegian-American historical association, STUDIES AND RECORDS, 4:63–73 (1929).

A study of the mental attitudes of Scandinavian newcomers especially towards American institutions.

Stølen, Thor Kittleson. En banebryders tilbageblik. DECORAH-POSTEN, October 4, 11, 1929.

Reminiscences of a pioneer who emigrated from Norway to America in 1850.

Swansen, H. Fred. The attitude of the United States toward Norway in the crisis of 1905. Norwegian-American historical association, STUDIES AND RECORDS, 4:43–53 (1929).

Based in part on documents in the archives of the department of state that have not heretofore been used by historical scholars.

Swanson, Roy W. Scandinavian place-names in the American Danelaw. SWEDISH-AMERICAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN, 2:5–17 (August, 1929).

The "American Danelaw" is Minnesota.

Totenlaget. Totenlagets aarbok, 1929. Utgit av bokkomiteen for Totenlaget. n. p. [1929] 143 p.

A year book. Contains list of members and short biographical sketches.

Trønderlaget. Trønderlagets aarbok, 1929. John Nornberg, ed. [Minneapolis, Augsburg publishing house, 1929] 93 p.

A year book. Contains articles, biographical sketches, and list of members.

Ueland, Andreas. Recollections of an immigrant. New York, Minton, Balch and Company, 1929. 262 p.

Reviewed in *Minnesota history*, 10:186–192 (June, 1929), *Reform*, 44:4 (February 14, 1929), and numerous other periodicals and newspapers.

Ulvestad, Martin. Norsk-Amerikaneren. Vikingesaga, samt pioneer-historie, statistik og biografiske oplysninger om nordmænd i Amerika. Seattle, Washington, 1928. p. 191–314.

Sketches and accounts of various Norwegian settlements in the United States. Apparently a republication in the main of material that has appeared earlier in other publications by the same author.

Ustrud, Hans A. A brief history of Nidaros Lutheran congregation, Minnehaha County, South Dakota. SOUTH DAKOTA HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS, 14:563–577. [Pierre, S. D.] 1928.

Veblen, A. A. Fra bygdelagsbevægelsens begyndelse. Bygdelagenes Fællesraad, AARBOK OG JULEHILSEN, 1929, p. 32–36.

A short account of the origin of the *bygdelag* movement.

Vestfoldlaget. Aarbok no. 1. Vestfoldlaget. Laget for Vestfoldinger i Amerika, 1929. M. A. Kalleberg, ed. n. p., n. d. 48 p.

A year book.

Who's who among pastors in all the Norwegian Lutheran synods of America, 1843–1927. Third edition of Norsk lutherske prester i Amerika. Translated and revised by Rasmus Malmin, O. M. Norlie, and O. A. Tingelstad. Minneapolis, Augsburg publishing house, 1928. 662 p.

When the first Viking settler came to **Wisconsin** almost 100 years ago. WISCONSIN MAGAZINE, 7:6–7 (February, 1929).

This brief historical account is accompanied by portraits of Ole K. and Ansten Natesta [Nattestad] and illustrations of early churches.

Wright, Ernest H. Boyesen, Hjalmar Hjorth (Sept. 23, 1848—Oct. 4, 1895). DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN BIOGRAPHY, 2:530–532.

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A SUGGESTION

The establishment of an endowment of considerable size would of course make certain the permanence of the work that has been begun by the Norwegian-American Historical Association. Funds are needed, and it is hoped that in not a few cases bequests will be made to the association for the enlargement of its permanent fund. The following form of bequest has been suggested:

Being in sympathy with the movement to preserve the records and make public the historical facts pertaining to the Norwegian-American people, I hereby give and bequeath unto the Norwegian-American Historical Association, incorporated under the laws of Minnesota, the sum of ..... dollars, to be paid in due course of the administration of my estate.

Signed.....